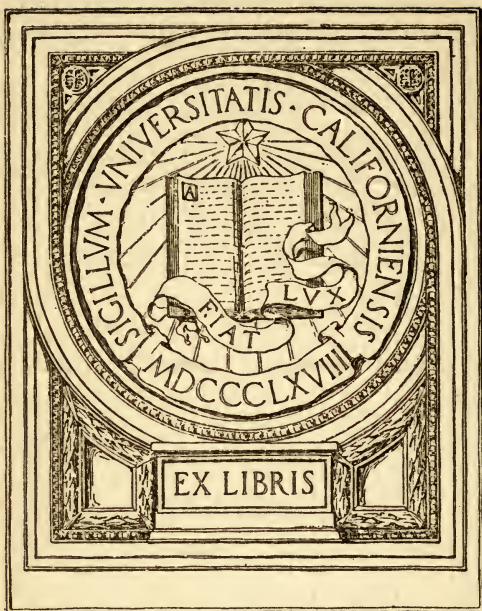




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BEGGARS' GOLD

By
ERNEST POOLE

HIS FAMILY

THE HARBOR

HIS SECOND WIFE

"THE DARK PEOPLE"

BLIND, A STORY OF THESE TIMES

THE VILLAGE, RUSSIAN IMPRESSIONS

BEGGARS' GOLD

Blue

BY

ERNEST POOLE

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To M. A.

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To M. A.

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BEGGARS' GOLD

CHAPTER I.

I.

IN New York, toward the end of an afternoon in the autumn of 1894, through the strident hubbub, the jostling, nervous rush of the crowds pouring into the old Grand Central Station, came two figures so incongruous that even in that whirling haste they drew curious glances. One was a large, heavy, young man of about twenty-eight, an American. The other, who barely reached to his waist, was a stout, little Chinese boy, in a padded coat of dark, blue silk, a black cap with a big, red button, blue trousers and white stockings. As he jogged along, his diminutive pigtail hung straight down and his face looked solemnly straight ahead; but his black eyes kept darting about, and as the pair pressed into the crowd his clutch on his huge companion's hand tightened and his jaws set hard.

They had come so far ahead of time that they found the train not yet made up, so they went to the waiting room. The place was filled with travellers, many of whom were as bored as they seemed; but scattered all about the room were others whose impassive eyes concealed an inner universe of travellers' thoughts and feelings — memories, anticipations, pictures of places left behind but vividly remembered now, homes and busy offices; and other scenes that loomed ahead; desires, schemes and business worries, sharp anxieties, loves and hates, jokes remembered with keen relish, and the pettiest little plans, hurt vanities, small jealousies — all back of those impassive eyes. Each one, busy with his own, paid little heed to the others. But even these people, as moments passed, cast looks of curious interest at the big man in his plain, gray clothes and the fantastic, little boy. What had brought this couple together?

A few of the people sitting there gave more than a casual glance to the pair, and most of these more attentive observers soon forgot to look at the child in their deepening interest in the man. There was nothing bizarre about him. His big burly figure was clothed in a cheap loose suit of grey, with bulging pockets at the sides, and he wore a large common straw hat over a thick shock of hair. What drew their attention more and more, and

gripped their curiosity, was the expression on his face. For, in spite of all its heaviness, in the sensitive lips and twinkling eyes was an anxious, almost wistful quality which made them ask, "What sort of a man is he? What kind of a life does he lead in this town, and what in the world is he doing here, nurse-maiding this young Celestial? Are they going to China? . . . No, only the boy. The man has come to see him off."

This conclusion they soon reached through watching the actions of the pair.

The man took out a bundle of tickets and looked them over, one by one — slowly and carefully giving directions. The boy kept nodding in reply, with a look of absorbed expectancy. When his friend had finished talking, they sat silent as before. But from time to time the lips of the little Easterner quivered and he clutched the other's arm. And into the heavy, sensitive face and the twinkling gray eyes of the Yankee crept once more that expression of anxiety and wistful regret. For the small boy by his side had been connected intimately with the happiest year of his life.

2.

From the time when he himself had been a boy upon a farm, in the inner world of Peter Wells the

word China had had a magic sound. As now he sat in the waiting room, there came into his memory a picture of another day in October, some twelve years ago, in a village up in the Berkshires. Down the mountainside a cold wind swept into a maple grove where several hundred people stood listening to a speaker with a hard, clear, incisive voice, a missionary whom their church and several other churches were sending over to China to convert the heathen there. As he talked, his words like the autumn wind made Peter feel cold and depressed. Standing first on one leg, then on the other, he was to all appearances a dull, stolid boy of fifteen; but for all that, deep inside, he was sensitive, impressionable; he lived alone with "the Widder Wells," who was religious to a degree; and he felt the call of the preacher now to an extent that would have surprised and gratified that grim individual, who was finding it hard to drive his message into the hearts of these unresponsive mountaineers. As the time for the collection drew near, his voice rose in a last appeal. China, a great jungle of darkness, a bleak desert of despair! The missionary, a martyr and God's chosen instrument, braving all, enduring all! Listening, Peter was made to feel that unless one offered himself to God and said, "Lord, send me where Thou wilt," he was a poor

specimen in God's eyes. And he knew he would never offer himself, and so he felt guilty and depressed.

His sense of guilt was made more acute by the feeling of the silver dollar in one pocket of his "pants." His devout mother had spurred him on to earn this money and give it in the collection today; but clutching it tight in his hand a vague but excited determination was growing in him to keep the coin and spend it at the county seat. He could get ten novels for that dollar — ten, delicious, thrilling tales of travel and adventure! As he thought of this sacrilege, which he knew he was about to commit, a feeling of resentment rose against the missionary. But this only made it worse; for if he hated this man of God, in what a hopelessly damnable condition his own soul must be!

"I guess I'm headed for Hell, all right," poor Peter thought discouragedly; and in the grim, cold, awful perplexity of it all, this business of duty, souls and God, he felt his whole mind drawn into a snarl.

Then he heard a low, sarcastic voice mutter just behind him:

"God, but ain't he lucky — takin' a great trip like that — seein' all China — while we farm?"

Peter turned with a slight start and saw his uncle, William Gowdy, a gnarled, shaggy individual with

black eyes that burned like coals from under heavy eyebrows.

"Martyr — shucks! Wouldn't I like to go to China? Wouldn't I like to see the world?"

The voice of the tempter muttered on. And a wave of emotion queer and deep surged slowly up in Peter's breast. At first just a glow of relief, it warmed into an exciting sense of peril and adventure. Bill Gowdy was a dangerous man; some even called him an "infidel". And so his rough whisper now was like the very voice of the Devil! But it did warm Peter so! It tightened his grip on that silver coin, unlocked his tortured snarl of thoughts, broke the spell of the preacher's eye.

"Martyr — shucks!"

With a grunt of contempt, William Gowdy turned away. Presently Peter followed him; and, as he walked out of the grove, that exultant glow of relief, which he did not trouble to understand, was with him still. "Martyr — shucks!" Those magic words seemed to have set him suddenly free. Once more he gripped the silver dollar. He had earned it cent by cent. Ten dime novels! "By Golly, I'll get 'em! I've a right to 'em!" he thought. Ten wild, fascinating tales that would carry him out all over the earth! Again he heard his uncle's voice: "Wouldn't I like to go to China?" And, as though

unlocked from a prison cell, the thoughts and fancies of Peter Wells, with a slow start but gathering speed, sped off away to the distant land behind the great, red, autumn sun that was sinking over the hills in the west.

What did he know about China? "I don't know nuthin'," he would have replied. But out of those subconscious depths, where all he had ever heard or seen, read, hated, loved, desired, dreamed, was stored as in a house of gold, up came marvellous pictures now. Golden idols, tinkling bells, sinister priests on murder bent, lurking in dark temples with long gleaming knives in their hands; enormous brightly painted junks attacked by swarms of river pirates; camels in long, weird processions winding over the desert at night; mandarins in shining robes watching their dozens of gorgeous young wives dance before them in the light of tossing paper lanterns; harem loves, escapes and murders; fields of poppies, opium dives! And Peter, the real Peter, had nothing to do with this at all except to scowl and hold his breath, as the pictures and entrancing sounds kept rising up before him. The spell was brief. Too engrossed to notice that his feet were bearing him home, the luckless lad was roused from his trance by the hard voice of "the Widder Wells" and sent about the evening chores. But he saw the

East in dreams that night. And waking in the cold, dark drawn, with other chores ahead of him, he groaned with the tedium of his lot.

"China! Gosh!" he whispered.

In the next week the vision paled. The stolid Peter of everyday came back into his own. He thought, "Nuthin' ever comes of dreamin'. Nuthin' will ever happen to me. There's nuthin' in China — nuthin' for me." And as for those dime novels — when his mother gave him griddle cakes for dinner that day, and other things he liked to eat, as a reward, she told him, for the dollar he had given to God — the honesty in Peter took hold of him to such a degree that after a long, inner struggle he confessed, gave up the coin, and was filled with a sense of righteousness which sat like a big, solid lump upon the rebellious, eager, dreaming Peter underneath. Moreover, despite his hearty dislike of the chores, he loved the life of this farm far up on the broad mountainside. There were so many things he liked to do. With two other boys he was nutting that autumn and setting out traps for mink and foxes; and with an old shotgun he went after "patridges". And often there were sunsets that made him feel all queer inside — though he would have flushed indignantly if anyone had told him so.

"I'm doin' pretty well as I am," thought Peter. He soon settled back into the familiar rut, and would

no doubt have stayed there, were it not for a little discovery that he made one autumn night down in Bill Gowdy's general store.

He had seldom talked to his uncle before. Bill Gowdy was a dangerous man. Gnarled and gray at fifty-five, childless and a widower, he lived alone in the rear of his store and "kept himself *to himself*" — except for rebel mutterings against the church, the library, the school, and even the name of the town. "Pearly Gates!" he was heard to sneer, as he stamped it on the evening mail. The post office was in his store. He had been able to keep it there by the hold that his sarcasms, his gleaming comments on events, had on the male citizens. They liked to chuckle at Bill's remarks. But "the Widder Wells" was one of those who spoke of him as "an infidel doin' no good to God or man." And so young Peter had let him alone.

But now, one night when the store was empty, he found his uncle in the back room, with an enormous book in his lap, in which he was pasting something. And so engrossed did he appear that Peter was drawn as though by chains to come softly closer. Then it was that he made his discovery. Bill Gowdy had a collection of stamps! For years he had collected, until the hobby had become a kind of holy of holies, jealously kept from village eyes, perhaps for fear of ridicule. "It's none of their business!"

he would have snarled, had he been asked the reason why. With a startled "Huh!" he now looked up and closed the huge volume with a slam. Then on second thought, apparently deciding that his only chance to keep this young fool quiet was to let him into the secret, too, he said:

"You give me your promise to shet up, an' I'll let you have a look at this album."

So began an intimacy which turned the whole course of Peter's life. The wide world was in that book, and the fascination of it all grew and grew upon him. The fascination of foreign names, of tiny, colored pictures of kings, emperors, rajahs, shahs, of great national heroes, of old cities, temples, mosques, of lions, elephants, unicorns, of ships and harbors, mighty rivers. This did not happen all at once. After the first excitement, the heavy Peter of everyday quickly reasserted himself. "There's nuthin' in stamps, nuthin' really at all, but a lot of little fool pictures," he thought. But as before, so now again, the dreaming Peter deep inside was stirred and roused by his uncle Bill, to whom these stamps were windows opening on foreign lands. Every dollar he could save, by close bargaining in his store, went into his collection. He fixed his thoughts on some rare, old stamp listed in his catalogues, then saved and cheated until he could buy it.

And as Peter saw the collection grow, he himself became filled with the lust of possession. He did odd jobs about the store and took his pay in "traders." On winter nights he hurried through the chores at home and followed the winding, snowy road down to the village, to be in time for the evening mail. Gone was all dread of his uncle now; and the little lies he had to tell, the secrecy of the whole adventure, only gave an added zest. To go through the night mail was like digging for gold; for, though all the letters were domestic as a rule, there came out of the bag at intervals a letter or a postcard from a young marine engineer whose home had been in Pearly Gates. From Calcutta and Bombay, Shanghai, Yokohama and many other Eastern ports, these letters came. He followed them home to get the stamps, sometimes he heard them read aloud, and his imagination burned!

Except for the few forbidden tales of travel and adventure that he had secretly bought or borrowed, Peter had found most books a bore. He turned to them now to get food for his dreams, but the food was not there. The high school geographies were filled with facts as dry as hay; and the books in the village library, selected by the minister and two of his deacons, seemed to have been written on purpose to show there was not a thrill on the face of

the earth — least of all in heathen lands. Now he began to understand Bill Gowdy's lone rebellion against library, church and school.

"They set out," said Bill, "to make the world look so tarnation flat and cold, it'd freeze a man into thinkin' of heaven. They set out to, an' they done it!"

Filled with a curious, grim delight at the hold which his beloved stamps were getting on his nephew, and more eager than he knew to share his secret passion, he now let Peter deeper into his strange treasure house. On some of the stamps were long, dizzy words in queer, heathen characters, Greek and Arabic, Chinese. With the aid of half a dozen little foreign dictionaries, they worked them out together, pronounced them with a nasal twang, savored them; and later on, in payment for more work in the store, he began to give Peter lessons in German — a language such as never before had been heard upon the face of the globe — for Bill Gowdy had learned it all alone.

"I chose German," he remarked, "because in these commercial days if you speak German and English you can get along most anywhere. And when I began to learn it, over twenty years ago, I still had hopes of travellin'." He sank into gloomy thoughts. "But my wife was alive," he muttered. Presently he shot a look at Peter from under his

shaggy brows. "Why don't *you* go travellin'? Your mother ain't so long for this world. Why not begin to fix things now so you can move — an' keep on movin'? Get a job that'll take you around!"

"What job?" burst from Peter Wells. Watching his blunt, freckled face, his uncle's eyes grew quiz-zical.

"God knows," he said. But, for all its heaviness, Peter's was a sensitive face; and, at the hurt expression of woeful disappointment that swept over it, in a kinder tone old William Gowdy added, "But there's always a chance for a travellin' job if you've got a furrin language."

So the lessons were begun. Peter made slow headway at first; but, doggedly holding to the tasks that his uncle gave him every night, at last he was able to speak a few words, with Bill Gowdy's accent. And now as they talked it back and forth, for the first time in his sixteen years, Peter's dull conviction, that he could never do or be anything of any account, began to lift, and there came intimations of thrilling powers in himself — deep, deep inside, like buried springs. Though he had no definite plan or ambition, he built pictures of himself in China, Russia, Africa. But he was slow, and chained as he was to "the Widder Wells" and the work on the farm, the idea of running away barely even entered his head. Peter was pretty comfortable. He was

fond of his mother, used to her; and, besides, she was getting old. No, he could not leave her yet. So the months slipped into years; and Peter was nearly twenty before the first opportunity came to escape the dull routine of the farm.

In the village school and high school, a new principal had arrived and was ejecting a little old life by dismissing the three teachers there. Two of the places had been filled, but the third was vacant still; and in spite of his uncle's disapproval and sarcastic comments, Peter listened to the urgings of the new school principal, who was having a desperate time to fill the one remaining place. Sensing Peter's *wanderlust*, he urged that the only chance for that lay in an education.

"At least," said Peter, "it's a chance. It's a damn sight better than workin' a farm."

"It isn't!" growled his uncle Bill. "There's somethin' real about a farm. This is just fillin' yourself with lies and feedin' 'em out into the minds of a lot of Christ-forsaken sheep!"

But Peter made up his mind to try, and for five uneventful years he taught school in Pearly Gates. The new principal was called away to a big school in Burlington; back came the old order of things, the dry dust of dull routine; and settling into that village world of bleak concentration on its own laborious affairs, as Peter grew into his twenties he

began to feel settled for life. His mother was still ailing, and the idea of looking about for a job away from home would never have occurred to him, had it not been for Bill Gowdy.

"There's other ways of teachin' things, there's other kinds of schools," he said, "with some life in 'em. Go to New York. There are libraries there where you can get books from every country under the sun, without its costin' you a cent. And, if you ain't blind enough to let some simperin' fool of a gal slip into place as your lawful wife, you can save your money for travellin'. You say you like geography best. All right, then make it your specialty. Your true geography teacher ought to see and keep seein' furrin lands!"

The idea took hold of Peter and, to get ready for such a life if the chance ever came to him, he went on with his German, then tackled a little French and Italian. In these studies his uncle joined, and what he did not mispronounce Peter did. At night, in the back room of the store, strange languages were spoken!

But all this time another side of Peter had been developing, and it filled his uncle with disgust. The little town of Pearly Gates was not all grim and heavy toil; it had its genial spirits, who could never be content unless they were getting up church suppers, picnics, "sugarin' offs", sleigh rides, dances.

And, because young men were scarce, Peter had been much in demand. Nor had he been slow to respond. For, beside the curious Peter of visions and imaginings, there was a comfortable Peter Wells, a large, stout, sociable young man who liked to be friendly, an overgrown boy, a human, kindly, wistful soul who felt himself bubbling inside with genial humor, and with elephantine grace tried at times to get it out. And, when they laughed at his quips and jokes, he was content with Pearly Gates. After all, it was quite a town. Moreover, he had warm blood in his veins, and he felt at times desires that filled him with a strange delight and a savage restlessness. These he clothed in sentiment and often thought himself in love. From such affairs he was drawn back by the caustic, mute derision of his uncle; but, as the years wore on, one girl, a curly headed blonde, emerged from all the others. She had red lips, gay, shining eyes and a fresh, enticing smile that hid a placid soul beneath. She was disturbed by no desires for outlandish countries. She loved to dance. On summer nights she liked a buggy and a man. She wanted a home and babies. She knew how to chloroform by smiles the queer, rebellious Peter, and to warm and glorify all the everyday life he loved. And, beneath her merry laughter and her giggles at his jokes and the lofty sentiments they

so earnestly exchanged, there was something else which grew and grew; and it stirred Peter's blood to such a degree that by the time of his mother's death he found himself pretty nearly engaged.

Once more it was his Uncle Bill who came to the rescue.

"You young idiot," he growled, when he learned of Peter's predicament, "you're free at last. For Christ's sake run! I ain't saying nuthin' against the dead — but oh God, how your Aunt Sarah Jane did love her home! And all women are like that! Wives ain't budgers! They sit to home — and the law of the land makes you sit beside 'em! Now look here!" he ended. "There's just one thing for you to do! Don't you never risk sayin' good-bye to that gal! Turn over the farm to me to sell, pack up to-night and get out of town tomorrow morning at five twenty-two — by the milk train — while it's still dark!"

That night Peter Wells had a terrible walk. The next morning, now heartily cursing his uncle and longing for the girl behind, feeling waves of shame and guilt, of loneliness and uncertainty, but again with a glow of anticipation, he sat at a car window and saw the day break coldly on the wide, outer world of his dreams. By nightfall he was in New York.

3.

Lonely, baffled, homesick there, he was soon on the point of going home. But a letter from his uncle came, announcing the sale of Peter's farm; and, before he recovered from this shock, he received another in the news that his application for a job as substitute teacher in the city public schools had been granted, and that he was assigned to a school down near Chatham Square. Gloomily he decided to try it. For weeks, in that mammoth house of din, he wrestled with the job of teaching sixty urchins who, with sudden jumps and piercing cries, shouted a shrill English that he could barely understand. Outside of the windows, every few moments a train came thundering by on the "L". A brief respite, then another roar. And the whole city was like that. In thundering waves of sound and color it drove in upon him. Dazzling lights and swarthy faces, harsh, incisive, guttural voices. Gone was the fascination of foreigners for Peter now. He saw them, dirty, hard and real, herding through the streets at night. What place for him in such a world? Doggedly nevertheless he held on; and in the classroom, facing those sixty little foreigners, he licked their lessons into them.

Then came the evenings. What to do? Leaving his stuffy boarding house and looking about for

some escape from the din and dirt of the foreign life, he went up-town, and on Broadway he wandered up and down the street hungrily watching the glittering dames who emerged from cabs and carriages and poured into the theatres. He followed them in, and on the stage saw others with even more vivid charms. One reckless night, he took a seat right down in the orchestra. Beside him a ravishing creature, perfumed and smiling, whispering, was engrossed in the man on her other side to such a degree as swept away all the gloom in Peter Wells. Life was warm and glamorous! "By God, I'll make my way in this town, I'll get my share of all this!" he thought. A girl spoke to him on the street that night. And Peter tried to get his share. And it left him disgusted, cold, depressed. But even this depression was unable long to weigh him down.

"All right, I was a young fool," he thought, "but all the same I'm going on to get what I set out for."

He had come to this town to teach and learn, and get ready to travel and see the world. And the crisp days of fall had come, and Peter felt as strong as a bull. Finding a public library, he asked for French and German books and tackled them hard, night after night, with a slow tenacious force; and within a few weeks this familiar pursuit had given

him a feeling of having a foothold in the town. He learned about the night schools now and began to teach in the evenings. He had a class of German Jews, and it gave him a thrill to discover that German and Yiddish were so much alike. Soon he could make himself understood; and, as he talked to his pupils now, he forgot his first revulsion against these guttural foreigners. With some of the young Jews in his class, he went to cafés where they talked and argued half the night, recounted jokes and stories, played pinochle, smoked cigarettes, drank beer and tea and coffee. In these little vices Peter took part. Puffing his pipe, he listened by the hour to this talk, all in a foreign language which he had learned to understand! It was as though a great gate had opened wide, and in a burst of confidence the genial Peter came to the surface; he gave them jokes and stories straight from old Bill Gowdy's store. His first attempts fell rather flat. The young Jews stared; and, when they laughed, it was at him, not at his jokes. With a scowl he drew back into his shell.

"My God," thought poor Peter, "have I no sense of humor?"

But a sharp voice broke into his embarrassment, and glancing up he saw a thin young Hebrew scornfully berating the group.

"You're a fine bunch of Jews!" he cried. "Ain't

you got any sense at all? We came to America, didn't we? We came to stay here, didn't we, and learn to be Americans—to spread all over the country, get into everything, learn it all! And here's a new American—a kind we've never seen before! Then why the hell don't you give him a chance?"

The effect of his words was magical. For hours, as he puffed his pipe, Peter was kept answering questions put with such flattering looks of respect, that his resentment was smoothed away. He was always welcome after that. And, in the course of the next two years, through his night school classes, he met other groups of foreigners, Italians, Greeks, Bohemians. Gradually, by day and night, the big school building where he taught became a world in itself to him. For now he had discovered that, in the terrific English spoken by these immigrants, the accents were of a hundred kinds. Italians and Sicilians, Greeks and some Armenians, and Irish, a few Austrian Poles, and Jews from all over Europe, were here. In the class-rooms and the noisy halls, by day and night to Peter's ears, grown sensitive to the slightest shades, came snatches of many foreign tongues. He was learning to tell them apart. And, proud of this queer power of his, and absorbed in this strange seethe and surge of life so close about him, he had little time to look ahead, or back to that day so far behind when the voice of

old Bill Gowdy had sent his fancy wandering off to the land beyond the setting sun.

Peter's grandfather, Jonathan Wells, had voyaged in clippers long ago to India, China and Japan. As though by some mysterious twist and turn of heredity, Peter himself was voyaging now. But his ship was his fancy; and his chart, his compass and binoculars were verbs, adjectives and nouns — the strangest, most entrancing nouns, that took him sailing far away to ancient cities over seas. A comfortable way of travelling. It began to seem as though the long, tormenting struggle between the two Peters was settled at last. For both of them were satisfied. Here he could both roam the world and settle into his student's groove. He bought a new pair of spectacles.

4.

He had quite forgotten China, till one night in a hallway of the school he came upon a weird, little irruption. Out of a class room just ahead shot a small, round figure, which turning blindly down the hall dove straight at Peter's stomach, rebounded and in a frenzy poured out a sobbing torrent of words so strange that Peter started forward. "What the devil is this?" he asked. With the zeal of a collector he seized the urchin by the arm. The

mite fought like a wildcat. Turning, twisting, scratching, he tore open Peter's vest. But Peter took no notice of that, for in the dim light of the hall he made out a little pigtail, and with an exultant thrill he tightened his grip upon his prey. Here was a rare new specimen!

He heard a low, indignant voice:

"What do you mean," it demanded, "by man-handling this little boy?"

Just then the frantic urchin knocked off Peter's spectacles.

"I'm not man-handling him," Peter growled, as he went like a huge bear to his knees. "The precious little brat is man-handling me!"

He heard a ripple of laughter then, and having found his spectacles he rose, still holding his captive, and confronted a dark-haired girl with an attractive, resolute face, a wide, firm mouth with sensitive lips twitching with amusement, and two challenging brown eyes.

"Moon Chao," she said. And at her voice the youngster became suddenly still, except for a faint wailing sound. "Will you please give me this Chinaman?" Her voice was low and quizzical, and her look revealed a frank enjoyment that put Peter at his ease. Then happened an astonishing thing. The boy jabbered at her in Chinese, and she replied in the same tongue — speaking swiftly

and fluently, as she gathered him into her arms. Before Peter could fully take this in, she had flashed a smile at him and was gone.

He stood there staring, frowning, then started abruptly after her, and through the open class room door he saw five Chinamen in a row. He saw the girl hand over her small captive to the man at one end, a stout genial individual with a placid, calm, intelligent face, who put one arm around the boy, smiled down at him and shook his head in a way that said very quietly: "How foolish to be so excited, my son." The boy snuggled close in under his arm, and the work of the class went on.

"Who is she?" wondered Peter. "And how did she ever learn Chinese?"

He felt a twinge of envy, and as he stood there listening he was stirred to the very depths of his language-loving soul. Hesitating for a time, he mustered courage and came in. She met him with a friendly smile.

"This is my China Club," she said.

"May I listen a while?"

"Of course you may."

She pointed to a seat in the rear, and turning to the blackboard she began printing slowly in large letters, "Shut the door." The row of Chinamen watched her chalk with an interest breathless and profound, leaning forward in their seats. All at

once one of them jumped up, went very quickly and shut the door. As he turned back in triumph, there was a burst of laughter, and excited voices, each one jabbering to his neighbor, nodding, smiling, beaming. Presently they fell silent and she began to write again.

All through the rest of the evening, Peter sat in the rear of the room, listening to a language of which he could not understand a word. "Not even a root!" he told himself in exasperation and delight. Here indeed was a wonderful tongue! He never took his eyes off the girl. Who was she? Had she lived in the East? What was she doing in this school? When she spoke English to the class, his sensitive ear caught a slight burr in her voice, which was rich and deep. "Is she Scotch," he asked, "or American?" With a barely conscious pang of chagrin, he felt that his curiosity was not shared by hers for him, for she barely looked his way. She showed an almost strained absorption in this little group of men. At times her smile would disappear and a frowning sharp intensity would creep into her brown eyes. But when the class was over and the beaming pupils had departed with many "good-nights," she turned back to Peter with a frank look of interest.

"Are you teaching here?" she asked.

"Yes."

"So am I — in the day school."

"But where did you ever learn Chinese?"

"In the dearest, loveliest city on earth — Peking," she said. "I was born there."

"Born there!"

"Yes — and I lived there until I was twelve years old."

Peter gazed at her with delight.

"You were lucky!" he breathed. She had turned to get her hat and coat, but she looked back at him with a lively curiosity.

"Yes, I know I was," she replied. "But how do *you* know? Have you been there, too?"

"No — but I mean to go," he said, "to every country under the sun! And it was China," he added, "that started me thinking — wanting that."

Her curiosity increased.

"How do you mean? Please tell me."

Little by little she drew him out — about the preacher and the stamps, Bill Gowdy and the languages. Soon he was talking rapidly, for he knew that the lights in the building would soon be put out for the night, and he had a good deal to tell this girl! His fluency would have surprised him, had he stopped to think of that. For here was a kind of miracle. It was as though the Peter of dreams had burst up sharply through the crust,

through the reserved, selfconscious Peter Wells of every day. Abruptly he stopped.

"That's all," he said.

"It's wonderful!"

"Is it?" He sat there in suspense. Would she go now? How to hold her? He mustered courage, and with a smile that was meant to be humorous he asked, "Then will you please tell me what is so wonderful about you?"

She gave a little laugh at that, then looked gravely back at him.

"The wonderful thing about me," she said, "is that I had a father who gave his whole life for a big idea."

"In China?" Peter ventured.

"Yes. He was an engineer."

"Was he Scotch?" Peter asked.

"Yes! How did you know?"

"By your accent," he answered, with a little gleam of pride.

"That's funny — I didn't know that I had it. No one ever noticed it before. . . . He was born in Scotland," she went on, "but became an American when he married my mother here and took her with him to Peking."

"But what did he do in China?"

"He worked with Chinese Gordon against the

schemes and intrigues of all Europe and Japan. His love for China was like a religion. Helpless now, right down on her back — but with a past and a future — oh, so vast and beautiful." She smiled a little. "Everything's vast in China — even the language," she went on. "But he made me learn to speak it. My teachers were a very solemn, old Confucian scholar and a funny, dear, old nurse who was as fat as fat can be, and wore blue silk trousers. We lived in Peking in the winter, and in the summer we went out to a lovely ruined temple up on the side of a low hill. My mother was an invalid, so Dad and I were very close. He had to be away most of the time, working on railroads and canals. And often — oh, for weeks and weeks — he worked literally day and night. For there was one kind of vastness he never could get used to. When great rivers overflowed, hundreds of thousands of people were drowned. And because he could never get used to that he — killed himself — by overwork."

She was looking directly at Peter now, but she seemed barely to notice him.

"A little while before he died, one evening we were together in front of that temple on the hill. And the plain was very dusky — with only little twinkles of light, and great shadows in between — and camel bells and sleepy calls — like a kind of singing. I was a small girl of twelve, but he talked

to me as though I were grown. You see, he knew that mother and I would have to go home to Ohio, where my mother had been born. But he hoped that, when I grew up, some day I would come back to Peking, and live and work for China. . . . And later, in Ohio, I often thought of what he had said. When I was eighteen, my mother died. I was already teaching school, but I decided that before I tried to get a position in Peking I had better go to New York and find out more about my job. So I came here three years ago and worked my way through Teachers' College," she concluded, smiling. "And so, Mr. Wonderful What's-Your-Name, I've told you the story of my life. Please don't think I do it often, sir. I'm really not that kind at all."

"I told you mine," said Peter.

"Yes, and it's very wonderful. What's your name?"

"Peter Wells."

"And mine," she said, "is Katherine Blake." She was up on her feet and she held out her hand. "Good-night, Peter Wells. Come back to my China Club — some evening when your wonderful life is not too terribly busy — and learn a little more Chinese."

5.

That was a great night for Peter. As he went home through the din and smell of the crowded tenement streets, he felt a new immensity in all he had ever dreamed about. Something in him poured up like fire and light. "China!" What new mystery and magic had come into the word? The next night he went to the library, got maps and books and plunged into the study of China and her language. He worked hard and did not stop to face embarrassing questions, but all the time he was vaguely aware that this feeling of immensity and fresh fascination came not only from the East but from strange depths within himself. Katherine Blake! With an astounding vividness her image rose before him, delightful and confusing. But he did not believe in love at first sight. That was all damned moonshine. He had thought himself in love before. He wanted to keep this different. So sternly he turned away from her image and went doggedly on with his work. And, with his gift for languages, Peter made such headway that within a few weeks, as he strained his ears in that small Chinese class of hers, he began to catch a few of the words. Every Thursday evening he came early to the class, in time for a little talk before the evening's work began. So he learned that she lived

alone in a boarding house on Stuyvesant Square, that she had a few acquaintances but not a single real friend in New York. She was poor, and her years at college had been crowded with little jobs by which she had managed to eke out a living. Poor kid, what a lonesome time she had had! He became tremendously friendly now; and, feeling her quickly respond to his big brother attitude, with a beaming satisfaction he went on mastering Chinese.

And this brotherly compassion and this sensible friendliness, and this mutual interest in the Chinese language, were doing very nicely — until one Thursday evening. She talked to her class of China that night, of the boundless wealth both in the land and in the minds and spirits of its four hundred million people. In her low, rich voice, now sharp and clear, she said,

“No matter how some foolish Americans may laugh at you here, I hope that you will never forget to be very proud of your country. China is poor — but China is rich — richer than the wildest dreams!” She paused for a moment, and then she said, “You are beggars sitting on bags of gold!”

The brooding, hungry, almost sad, yet challenging gleam in her brown eyes went into Peter like a flame.

“My father said that,” she ended. “And it is true of all of us.”

Peter walked home with her that night; and though their talk was all of this gold that lies inside each one of us, and of the books of William James, and of the subconscious self and other very solemn things, their excited voices kept breaking into laughter as though it were all the merriest and gayest joke conceivable. Suddenly she stopped by his side.

"This is where I am living," she said.

Peter frowned and cast a look of indignant disapproval up at the offending house which was about to swallow her.

"It isn't China," he remarked.

"How do you know it isn't?" Kate retorted gravely. "It may have a China tucked away somewhere inside."

A low laugh and she was gone.

As Peter went home he threw all cautious brotherhood and language-learning to the winds. He wanted this girl! He had wanted her from that first night! Why not confess it? The Peter of dreams was rampant now. In his room he savagely looked at himself in the cheap, cracked mirror there and thought, "It's hopeless! How can she care for me?" But then again he was shaken by this boundless, new desire, this wanting to slave for her, give her his life. "And *this* is me," poor Peter thought. "More real than any other me that I've known before! And if she'll only let me try. . . ." His

imagination leaped ahead to what a Peter he might be! Once more he looked into the mirror, and groaned. "I may look like a boarding house, but by God I've got a China inside!"

He grabbed his Chinese grammar and went ferociously to work. For him all other languages, and all those other friends of his, talking and arguing in cafés, were out of his existence. To go to China, that was enough. "And stay there, too, for the rest of my days!" decided Peter recklessly. He was in no mood for cautious thoughts or any sensible planning. His whole existence went along by fits and starts, by ups and downs. Now she let him take her to concerts, plays and for long walks; and, though they talked in the friendliest tone, up and up and up came the gold — till at times the whole aspect of the town was changed in the most astonishing ways, with this glory that kept pouring up from somewhere inside of them. Often he felt his amazing luck. He had found her just in time — while she had no friends, while her life in New York was still hard, bare and lonely. "Thank God!" he thought. Then, "What a brute I am, to be glad of that!" With a wave of remorse and tenderness, he wanted to help her, give her things, keep off everything that was hard. "She isn't strong," he told himself. "She's living up to the last notch." But when he showed the slightest sign of any such

protecting mood, Kate laughed at him. There was in this girl a laughing, warm vitality, that left him humbled and abashed. She could think so much quicker than himself. Now close, confiding, intimate; again she would suddenly slip away, and wistfully he felt depths in her that he himself could never plumb. Often she spoke of her father and the time when she was a little girl, and Peter listened hungrily. And the China that he builded was all mingled in his fancy with lights that came in her brown eyes, shades of feeling in her voice, so rich and low with its slight burr. Old cities, crowded, rich bazaars, temples, mountains, river banks, came into the picture one by one. And now he could feel she was taking him there and wanting him to love all that. Then suddenly he was left behind.

And Kate had her practical side. It was not only the lack of money that kept her from going to Peking; there was so much to learn right here in New York. "What do I know of America — really know, so that I can teach it? Almost nothing!" she exclaimed. She was taking various courses up-town in domestic science, economics; and often she would talk of such work until poor Peter was fearfully bored. Suddenly she would relent.

"I'm tired of being so awfully solemn. Aren't you?" she asked, one evening.

"I am!" he replied. At the emphatic tone of his voice, Kate shot a look at him and said:

"Perhaps you think me — hopelessly so." And at his fervent denial she gave him a grateful smile. "I'd hate to bore you, Peter Wells," she confided, in a tone that thrilled him through and through. But as he drew close to her she added, "Because, don't you see, it's my business not to bore you. It's my business," she went on, "to make all the friends for China I can." She beamed on him. "You're the first," she said; and then, with a sigh, "But China needs so many."

"So that's her game!" thought Peter. He took her that night to a roaring farce, and laughed in a savage, reckless way as though he were going to the dogs. But between the acts she was suddenly so very intimate and small and altogether appealing that his anger melted away. Like a humble elephant, he tried desperately to make her feel how safe and gay and delightful life with him might be some day. And how she seemed to appreciate every little joke he made! How plainly then she let him see that she thought him very funny and dear!

One evening not long afterward she took him into Chinatown, and in a little theatre they sat with Moon Chao between them watching his father on the stage. Great China drew close to them that

night. Straining to catch the low spoken words and understand the pantomime and the weird symbols in the scene, Peter felt the small boy beside him staring at the man on the stage — worshipping his ancestor; and he felt the dark-haired girl nearby staring back into the years — worshipping, too.

“What hope for me?”

But from that communion with somebody far away, she came back to Peter with a radiance in her face which he soon began to feel was for himself. It was as though with her ancestor she had at last made up her mind. And she was so frankly and openly happy with him as they walked home; she talked to him so earnestly of what his life in China might be if only he would hold to his plan — that Peter, his throat tightening, resolved to ask her there and then. He was slow, and he felt her holding him back, as though she were pleading, “Not just now.” So he put it off once more. But he barely slept that night. The next day in school he was irritable, making the most savage remarks to many astonished, little boys; and, catching the curiosity in their shrewd, bright eyes, he thought, “This has got to end!” The bell rang for a change of classes. On an impulse, he hurried to her room and drew her out into the hall. Peter’s big face was set and white.

"Look here," he said, "I can't stand this! Will you — will you marry me?"

"Yes!" she gasped.

Back she went to her room, and Peter to his. And at sight of him the shrewd eyes of his pupils snapped with interest. But Peter took no notice of that, for the faces of these urchins and all other sights and sounds had receded far away, and he was sunk in a world of his own, dynamic and tumultuous, with vistas opening over the earth and waves of a feeling of boundless power to go anywhere, do, see, and feel anything under the sun by day or the stars by night. Suddenly he saw again the new radiance in Kate's brown eyes — and Peter was seized with a feeling of humbleness, of tenderness.

6.

They were married that same week. The Easter Vacation had just begun, and before it was over they were ensconced in a little apartment on Stuyvesant Square, in a large, old-fashioned house. The generous, high-ceilinged rooms were filled with ugly furniture. Kate got rid of some of it and moved in a few belongings brought many years ago from Peking — a queer, old table, her father's chair, a large piece of rich brocade that had been the robe

of a priest, and a few prints in blue and gold. One was of a towering range of snowy mountains; another was of a broad river teeming with the life of the East. And, from a shadowy corner, a huge, golden Buddha looked out on the new life in this room with ageless and inscrutable eyes.

But they had little time for China now. They were so sure of going there that they happily put the thought aside. They were wholly absorbed in one another, in the discoveries large and small, the shocks and the perplexities, that came with this adjusting of two lives so wide apart. How different their lives had been Peter had never realized. Now, with the barriers dropping down, and this warm, impulsive girl giving, giving, giving, the qualities he had not known and would never really understand loomed rapidly up. He came upon abrupt dislikes, small delicacies and restraints and sudden revulsions in this girl, who at twenty-two was so mature and yet "such a kid," so quick to change. All at once, with a grim dismay, he could feel the barriers rise again. More often the discovered differences would be swept aside by her low, rich laugh.

They were both back at work in the school. They had their first little scene over that, for, with the exultant feeling of new strength which had come to him, Peter had made up his mind to do the earning for them both. But when he asked Kate to

give up her job, she looked at him with a surprised, indignant flash, as though demanding, "What kind of a man is this that I've married?"

"Oh Peter, dear, you're so comic at times! Don't you know that I'm going to teach all my life?"

"Of course you are! I didn't mean that. You'll teach in Peking — you'll work like a little Trojan there. But I want to give you time to study and go about and learn all you'll need to know for that! Don't you see what I mean? This day school job — you've already learned from it all you can. It's drudgery now and nothing else! And I want to do that for both of us! Can't you see how I feel?"

"Yes." She came into his arms. "And can't you see how I feel?" she asked. "I want to earn my own living. And until I'm very old and very decrepit, Peter dear, I shall go on earning it. And that," she added smiling, "is one of the very many things that you must let me decide for myself." When he pressed his point, she cut him off. "We'll earn more this way," she said, "and so all the sooner get to Peking."

So every morning they went to school. In the evenings she took up again her study of the many things she wanted to know for their work in the East. And before, in their apartment, the newness and the fresh delight had had time to wear away, a novel intimation of the vast dream life ahead came

into their home, in the small, round person of Moon Chao.

They had already asked the little boy to supper with them several times, had feasted him and petted him as the fellow who had made the match; and Kate had prevailed on his father to let him come to the day school, where she had him in her class.

But late one afternoon she came home looking so pale and anxious that Peter asked her quickly,

"What's the matter? Where have you been?"

"Hunting for Moon Chao!" she said. "His father is dead! He was killed last night — stabbed on the street — in one of those wretched feuds of the Tongs! I didn't learn till this afternoon. Moon wasn't at school this morning. As soon as I learned, I went right down to his father's rooms — then to the theatre — restaurants — every place I could think of! It was no use. Nobody knew — or if they did they wouldn't tell me. Moon has gone! He's terrified probably, poor little tike — think what a panic he must be in! He lived alone with his father — he has no other relatives here. He's barely nine years old, Peter — and he saw his father stabbed! And now he thinks they're after him!"

Peter grabbed his hat and coat.

"Don't worry," he said, "I'll find him. I'll find

him if it takes all night. You get some rest — you look played out." He kissed her.

"Bring him here," she said.

With a truant officer, Peter searched Chinatown that night, and they found Moon Chao in a six cent "dump" out on the edge of the quarter. On the top floor of the lodging house they entered a long, stifling room with tiers of bunks on either side all filled with ragged sleepers. Others lay snoring on the floor. At one end beside the stove, an old man half naked was attending to his loathsome sores. From somewhere behind him, Peter heard a low, quavering wail, and peering into the corner he saw Moon Chao crouched on his heels. An instant later, with a bound and a loud sob of terror, the little boy shot past them through the door and down the stairs. Through the crooked, crowded streets below they chased him, but lost track of him. The search went on till midnight. Then Peter thought of the theatre. They went there, and out of the darkness heard again the poignant wail. The truant officer struck a match and lighted an old gas jet, and presently they found Moon Chao huddled up in one of the seats. Again he tried to get away, but he was too exhausted now. Soon Peter had him in his arms. Their questions brought no answer but a stare from his black eyes, fixed, dilated, bright

with fear. But later that night in Peter's home, with Kate holding him in her arms and whispering to him in Chinese, Moon Chao began to whisper back, looking up imploringly into her face.

"He wants to go back to China," she said. "He says he has an uncle there — a very kind, good uncle — in Peking or Shanghai — he isn't sure which. But he's begging us to keep him here and write a letter — perhaps many letters — and find out and send him home."

So Moon Chao came to live with them. Kate gave him a vigorous bath that day, laughed at his protesting squeals and loved the look of content that came on his haggard, little face when she had tucked him into their bed. Then she bought him a small, blue bed of his own, and a suit of clothes, and underclothes and stockings. "Give him a haircut? Oh, Peter!" she cried, when her husband suggested a barber shop. She carefully dressed his hair herself, in a sort of Chinese style. And all this time, laughing, petting, mothering him, she was getting that terror out of his eyes. Each morning after breakfast, they went to school, all three together; and often in the afternoons she took Moon Chao about to the shops. An overcoat, then books and toys — she found so much to buy for him. Recklessly she squandered her wealth. In return, as the weeks wore on, he became her adoring slave.

"You see, Peter," she said, smiling, "he's more than just a dear little boy. He has all China back of him."

And into that vast background he began to give them glimpses now. Uncanny, strangely silent at times, under her questioning he would emerge and would try hard to tell her all he could remember — the way his uncle's home had looked, and the garden, his uncle's small bazaar. She gleaned what information she could and sent letters to Shanghai and Peking. But Moon had been only six years old when he came away to America, and his recollections were all mixed with lonely imaginings of his own and things his father had told him — of his mother and their home in Peking, the theatre where his father played, and a Chinese school, a temple, a big painted boat on a river, a fish he had caught, "so great as myself," that had almost pulled him into the water.

"And then I would have gone down — oh down! Oh down, oh down, oh down!" he cried.

"For goodness sake stop it, Moon Chao!" she exclaimed. "Or you'll hit the bottom!" The small boy gave her a roguish smile.

"And then I would bounce from that bottom," he said, "up out of the water — into the sky!"

These glimpses that he gave them, into a great country and a very little boy, took hold on their

affections and their own imaginings, made their new home unique and strange. Moon Chao gravely playing with toys, or looking intently at picture books or listening to stories she read, would seem to retreat into far distant memories; then suddenly he would chuckle or laugh, and start them speculating as to what it was he considered so comic. Why he laughed — this was only one of the enigmas. He was stormy in his love; and, when she failed to understand something he was trying to say, there would be irruptions of raging impatience, fits of despair.

"All Chinese children aren't like this," she told Peter earnestly. "Far from it. I've seen them playing — on the streets and in the fields — just perfectly natural little boys. But Moon — it's not only his tragedy and his being so far away from everything he was used to — I think it's his actor father, too, who was a genius in his way — and Moon is like him, he is that kind. If he hasn't any relatives left, or our letters fail to find them, we'll keep him — won't we, Peter — and take him with us to Peking. Think what he'll mean to us — all our lives — because he came to us just now — when we're so very happy, dear!"

When a few months later she learned that she was to have a child of her own, she kept Moon Chao in her new broodings, plans and dreams for their

life in the East. They would adopt him as their own. . . . And so it was with a shock of dismay that they read the letter which came at last from China bidding them send him home. The uncle had proved to be real, after all, and one of her letters had reached him. He was a merchant in Peking — not rich, but comfortably off, and anxious to take his brother's child. He sent a money order for the ticket to San Francisco, where Moon was to be met at the train by an agent of his uncle's and placed safely on the boat.

As they began to realize what the loss of Moon Chao would mean, a feeling of emptiness came to them both, as though the warm, fresh wonder of that opening year together had been suddenly chilled and dimmed. Moon Chao had become so a part of that.

When they told him, he was very still.

"Yes — I go," he said. That was all. No tears or kisses or regrets. But till late that night, as she lay awake, Kate could hear him stirring in his bed, could feel him staring up into the dark.

There was little time for brooding. To catch the boat he must start very soon. So there were last purchases, and the packing of a small trunk, and the ticket to buy, and anxious plans and directions for the journey. A letter was to be pinned to his sleeve; and from one train to another, all across

the continent, conductor after conductor was to hand him on. When the time for his departure came, Kate took him a moment in her arms.

"Remember, dear, we're coming, too."

As Moon looked gravely at her then, his lips began to tremble, but instantly he was quiet again.

"Yes—you shall come," he answered.

7.

Because Kate was not well that day, it was Peter who took Moon Chao to the train. Sitting in the waiting room, there kept drifting through his mind fragments of those memories of how the distant land in the East had little by little cast its spell upon his life, and he wondered how it would end. Would he really spend his days in China? Suddenly the whole idea seemed fantastic as a dream. For there swept over him a sense of what he had been a few years ago. And the gap was too prodigious! Even his marriage seemed unreal—till the small figure at his side brought back the present. Then he let his huge right hand drop on his companion's shoulder.

"We shall miss you very much, Moon Chao."

The boy looked quickly up, then down.

"It is hard for me to leave you," he said, very softly. Peter felt a tightening in his throat. But

as now for the last time he went over the directions, Moon Chao nodded quietly. The trip did not seem to frighten him. What a strange little boy! "He'll get along all right," Peter thought. "Half the time he will barely notice the train. He'll crawl into himself like a snail—into his own imaginings. I wonder what will become of him?" And aloud he asked, "What do you want to be, Moon Chao, when you grow to be a man?"

The small boy looked up at him.

"I shall try to be a great actor—like my ancestors," he softly replied.

For a moment Peter was very still.

"Yes, you must try," he answered. Then he began to tell Moon Chao the fable which Kate had woven around her father's pregnant phrase, "We are beggars sitting on bags of gold."

"An old beggar lay down by the road. He was in rags and covered with dust, and so tired and so hungry and sick that he rested his head on his beggar's bag, and very soon he fell asleep. In his sleep a great god came to him. 'Look in your bag,' he whispered. 'It is not rubbish but pure gold!' The old man woke up and trembled. Quickly he seized the dirty old sack and jerked it open, and out on the ground poured a torrent of gold and precious stones!

"That is China," Peter ended, with his arm

around Moon Chao. "And that is yourself. You must never forget. No matter how poor your life may be, you must be proud—you must look in—into your country, into yourself—and always you will find the gold."

"Always I will find the gold!" burst in a whisper from Moon Chao. Peter saw that he had soared away on wings of fancy to the East. And so intense was the light in his eyes, that a wave of strange exultation swept into the spirit of Peter Wells. "How much there is in him!" he thought. "How much in me, in all of us! And we barely ever get a gleam! We dare not look, we dare not know!"

From somewhere in the world outside, remote and hard and commonplace, a rasping nasal voice announced the train on which Moon Chao was to begin his journey. With a dazed and startled look upon his heavy sensitive face, Peter pulled himself together and took his companion to the train, settled him in his Pullman seat and talked to the conductor. That tall lean official said, "Sure. I'll keep an eye on him." And standing a little later beneath the car window, Peter in his fancy saw Moon Chao being handed on and on around the world, an atom in torrents of human beings, serene, inscrutable, with his own life, so small, so immense, all hidden behind those shining eyes which were looking down through the window fixedly at Peter's face.

Slowly the train moved out of the station. Peter walked on beside the car. A last wave of his hand, and a last glimpse of the round little face pressed tight to the window. Then it vanished. Moon Chao was gone.

CHAPTER II.

I.

THE departure of Moon Chao left Kate a little blue and depressed. China seemed very far away. "How will it be with us now?" she asked herself, that evening. She had a premonition of how with the baby's coming the burden on Peter would increase. She herself would have to stop teaching, and expenses would mount up. She stole an anxious glance at him as he sat with his pipe and the evening paper. They had been married barely a year, yet already she understood him so much better than he did himself. "He thinks he's terribly sorry to have Moon gone," she reflected. "Yet part of him is greatly relieved to be rid of Moon Chao and settled down—right here in New York." How he loved familiar things; how slow and cautious he could be. "Suppose it grows on him," she thought, "in spite of all that I can do, and he goes on and on—right here—getting heavier and heavier." All at once a picture came to her of a Peter dull, massive, middle aged; and she felt a wave of sharp impatience. Kate was only twenty-three. She felt things suddenly like that.

For a few moments, sewing rapidly, she kept her eyes upon her work. Then in a swift scrutiny they went back to her husband's face. "Heavy, stolid, dull? Not at all! That's only on the surface!" she went on, in an eager defense of this man to whom she felt she was tied for life. And she thought of the wistful, hungry Peter beneath the crust of New England reserve. "That's what I fell in love with. He's really bubbling over—with fun and dreams and oh so much—and he tries so hard to get it out. But how clumsy, awkward, sensitive!" That was one of the things in him that had appealed to her from the start. He looked so enormously tough, and yet was so defenseless. Worries could drive in on him so. What would the next years do to him? She thought of his crowded class-room. As a teacher herself, she knew so well what a deadening strain it was. "Shall we get away from it in time?" But as quickly, the next moment, came a rush of self-reproach. "Shall I just sit back and criticize—or jump in and help him, do my share, and see this through? Get away in time? Why shouldn't we? Go to Peking? Of course we'll go—and before we're many years older, too!"

She looked up at him with a smile. But, behind his paper, Peter was plunged in thoughts of his own.

"This dream of hers, of going to China—what

will come of it?" he asked. "She wants it—yes. But look what she does. This little Chinaman comes along, and she promptly squanders on him half of all the money we've saved, though she's soon to have a child of her own." He recalled the numberless books, toys, games, and other things, which in her impulsive way she had kept running out to buy. And he loved her for that and pitied her, and felt protecting and mature. "What a kid she is, after all," he thought, "acting on her impulses. But there's a queer, sharp streak in her, too." As he thought of that impatience in Kate, and then of her warmth and youth and beauty, with a little twinge he asked, "What can she see in a man like me? Haven't I felt from the word 'go' that it was too good to be true, all this? Suppose she sees that China dream slipping, slipping, all because of marrying me and having a baby—and times get hard—how can I ever make her happy?" A frown of perplexity, almost dismay, came on his heavy, sensitive face. "I will, though—I'll find a way. A way? No hundreds—big and small! That's how it will be. What a complicated business marriage is," he ended. "Here I was a year ago, free to do as I liked, build my own life—and Kate, the same. Now all of a sudden—together! How it changes things!"

He felt his thoughts lock into a snarl. Then he glanced up and met her smile; and he could feel

himself relax, and all his thinking grew clear again. It was as though the whole last year had risen suddenly crying, "It's sure! There's nothing to be afraid of here!" A moment in silence they smiled at each other. Back went their thoughts to little Moon Chao.

"Don't let's ever forget him, Peter," she said. "He means so much. He's that part of us, dear—he's our first year, our starting out. And we're going to keep right on, you know. Aren't we? Aren't we?" Out came her hand. He took it in his and felt it tense and nervous, challenging, demanding.

"Yes, Kate—we'll keep right on!" he said.

2.

She had given Moon Chao letters to mail back to her on his journey. One by one the letters came, and her anxiety was allayed. She pictured him farther and farther away. Now he was on the ocean; then at last he was in Peking, and a letter arrived from his uncle thanking them for what they had done.

"If you come to China as you have planned, we shall be happy," he ended. "For we need such Americans here."

But, in the months that followed, the thought of

Moon Chao slipped out of Kate's life. Now she had stopped teaching; and, at home most of the day, as she finished baby clothes, more and more her thinking centered on the child to be born. Peter was quick to sense the change. There were nights when in high spirits she seemed to want to do nothing but make fun of him, love him, talk and plan, in an eager, restless happiness. There were times when she was sharp and cross, wishing only to be left alone. But from the looks that came on her face, he caught glimpses now and then into that strange Woman's Land, where were not only brooding intimations on the life unborn, but so many memories, too, ties in a subconscious world with all she had ever felt, desired, loved or hated. Such elemental forces were working down there in the dark. One night he pushed a heavy chair against the golden Buddha. Down it came with a crashing jar. He heard a quick breath, like a gasp, and turning saw a look in Kate's eyes as though he had smashed her childhood. The next moment she burst into tears, sobbing, trembling violently. Then, at his penitent, scared expression, she laughed at him and at herself, and came into his arms and kissed him. He felt her lips warm and quivering; he felt her whole body trembling still. The big god was not much damaged, and with gold lacquer and some glue they soon had it looking as before.

But the strangeness in her was always there. More and more she slipped away from him.

Upon the night when the child was born, Peter sat in the other room staring straight before him, his mind a blank, till all at once from its shadowy corner he met the Buddha's inscrutable eyes. That phrase of her father's flashed into his mind: "We are beggars sitting on bags of gold." And a strange excitement seized him. "How little we know!" It was as though an opening door had given him just one gleaming look down into the vast enigma of life. At the weird, shrill cry that broke on his ears, he grew rigid in his chair. But the eyes of the great, golden god were as inscrutable as before.

3.

As he noticed the relief that transfigured her whole face, those days, Peter cast all misgivings aside. "This is all good, all wonderful! Now she'll come back to me!" he thought. And at first it happened just like that. As they bent over the tiny girl, watching the little jerks of her arms and contortions of her features, Peter and Kate were a happy pair. They decided to call her Susanna. How quickly that name became familiar; how soon she fitted into their lives. Kate's strength returned so rapidly that within a few days she dismissed

the nurse and began to take care of the baby herself, in addition to doing the housework.

Then Peter coming home one night found her in bed with a fever. In alarm, he ran for the doctor; and so began a period of such anxiety and strain as he had never dreamed of. Her heart, it seemed, had never been strong, and serious damage had been done. Night after night Peter told himself, "It's nip and tuck—just touch and go!" Haggard, flushed, unconscious, rousing to delirium, seeing things he could not see, deep engrossed in a world of her own, muttering and clenching her fists—this older, stronger, stranger woman, whom he did not know, doggedly fought to keep alive. And he could feel her winning. At last one day she looked up at him with tired, clear and smiling eyes.

"Well, dearie, here I am again."

Peter bent clumsily, took her hand and pressed it hungrily to his lips.

"Now stay here!" he whispered. "Don't let's take any more fool chances! Just be quiet—for God's sake! Just—just go to sleep!" he implored. And with a weak little twitch of amusement she did as he asked. Peter felt weary, beaten, broken, as though he had been through a mill. "This is marriage and a baby!" he thought. "Just the beginning! Now what next?" Little Susanna loomed

immense, crowding out everything else from their home. After a month of convalescence, Kate was up again at last; but her illness had struck deep.

"Your heart will never be the same," the physician warned her, "and on no account must you ever risk having another child." With a kind of angry quiet she faced the situation. "I'm not going to be an invalid! And, if this is my only child, she's going to have everything that I can give her!" she resolved. "I've got the other work besides—cooking, washing, cleaning. All right, why not? Most women have to." And she settled down to work.

Peter, in the meantime, was having worries of his own. Their money was spent and they were in debt. Moon Chao and China, utterly gone! One after the other the bills came in, from the doctor, the nurse, the druggist, milkman, grocer, butcher, and a small florist down the street. "The damned robbers!" Peter thought, but as he went over the items he found that they were all correct. Gradually he remembered now how through that long nightmare he had kept rushing out to buy some little extra thing that might just possibly help a bit. In dismay he looked back as into a fog and asked himself, "What else did I buy?" Guiltily he strove to hide this ominous evidence from his wife, but she found him out and scolded him.

"Now, Peter," she ended firmly. "You poor comic business man, go back to your school where you belong, and leave this part of it to me."

Humbly he obeyed her; and, in the weeks that followed, he discovered with relief that after many experiments Kate was working out a way to take care of her baby and her home without overtaxing her strength. But it took all the strength she had, and more and more he could feel her centering on their little girl. When he came home in the evening, he found an absent-minded wife who tried to put her worries aside and talk to him, but whose anxious mind was always in the other room. More bills came in, kept piling up, for she could not keep expenses down.

So Peter went back to his night-school work. There in his classes, as time went on, he found a few so impatient to learn that they were willing to pay him for tutoring in their tenement homes. He added this to his evening work and did not get home till twelve o'clock. Peter was as strong as a bull, and so he did not feel the strain, but he was soon heartily sick of the job. These foreigners had long ago lost all spice of novelty. It seemed as though every pupil he had—Russian, Pole, Roumanian or Hungarian—was a Jew. Some of them appealed to him. A friendly, decent, likable lot, they would talk of the life they had left behind in queer old

cities and somber towns, and Peter would listen with some degree of his old interest and delight. But more kept strictly to the job, to squeeze out of him all they could in the way of an education. They were so rabid to get on, and so much brighter than himself. He had thought that Jews wanted nothing but money. "Well, I was wrong," he decided grimly. "What they want is to gather in everything that has ever been learned—everything that has ever been seen—or heard or felt—since time began! And what's more, they're going to get it, too! They'll own the whole city before they get through; and, my God, what a cultured town it'll be!"

Compared to these keen foreigners, how dull and slow he felt at times. What chance had he to get on in New York, or even to get away from the town? China? It might as well have been Mars! How completely, he reflected, Kate had put it out of her thoughts. Impulsive and impatient still, she was often cross and irritable with him for the many mistakes he made from an over-anxiety to help. "Oh, Peter, please don't interfere! If you'd only leave me alone!" she would cry. Then she would grow repentant; and in those smooth, blessed weeks when Susanna was steadily gaining, Kate would praise and pity him for the way he stuck to the drudgery which she knew he hated so. Soon they

would be out of debt. She would bring out the old books and maps and talk of going to Peking. And later, coming into his arms and holding him tight, she would whisper,

"Don't give up! You're doing so splendidly, Peter dear! We'll get through all this! You'll see!"

On such nights, in a flash he realized that she was the same girl beneath—ardent, thirsting, dreaming still. And memories came of their first year. But how far behind it seemed! The letters that came from little Moon Chao were like gleams of a distant light. Kate had welcomed them at first and had written long letters in reply; and, as she rapidly set down the curious Chinese characters which she had learned to write as a girl, the whole expression of her face had changed. But, between such messages, the intervals had soon increased. And so it had been with her China Club. In the first year of their marriage, she had invited the Club to meet here; and there had been Chinese suppers, weird music, recitations by the father of Moon Chao. But since the birth of Susanna, the meetings had never been the same. They had become repressed affairs of low, guarded voices. Susanna asleep was in the next room. Moreover, she was so often ill, that the meetings had to be called off. At last, one Thursday evening, Peter found Kate very blue.

"The Club is done for, Peter. I've had to call it off again. And this time will finish it."

She turned and went into the bedroom, as Susanna's wail was heard. Peter found her by the crib, mechanically humming a lullaby, with the tears rolling down her cheeks. She smiled and whispered, "I'm just silly! Don't worry—please! I'll be all right!" And she went to bed. But later, by her side in the dark, he thought he could feel her rigid and still, her mind far off in China, communing with her ancestor.

"What's to be done to get out of this?" he asked in desperation. Although awake till nearly dawn, he could think of no solution. But the rebellious Peter inside was rising now in gleams of wrath; and a few nights later with one of his pupils there came a sudden explosion. The pupil this time was not a Jew but an Italian, with a bull neck, thick, red hair, tough, freckled face, and omnivorous eyes. Shrewd as any Yankee or Jew that ever cheated, tricked or lied, this chap was already running a thriving business in cheap cafés, and he felt the need of an education to fit him for his new station in life. Into his hour with Peter he tried to crowd not only reading and writing but American history, geography, arithmetic.

"What else do you want to know?" Peter asked.

"All, all!" his pupil cried. "There is nothing

that I will not learn! Do you know how I am sure of this?" He struck his head with a huge, freckled fist. "It's here! I can feel it, all inside!"

"You can, eh." Eyeing the man with a keen dislike, Peter felt with a shock that this grasping brute was a burlesque upon himself and his own mysterious hunger. He closed his book with a slam and arose.

"Not for fifty cents," he growled, and put on his hat and coat. The man rushed after him, wheedling, bargaining.

"All right, all right—sixty cents. Now wait—be sensible! Seventy-five!"

Peter swung 'round abruptly, all New England back of him.

"Not for a hundred dollars! I don't like you, and I'm through!"

As he strode wrathfully into the hall, he heard the man behind him snarl in Italian to his wife,

"There's an *Americano* who will never get on in life!"

"Won't, eh?" With grim satisfaction Peter went down the rickety stairs and out of the garlic smelling house. "I'm through with 'em, these foreigners, and all the languages they speak—all they want or think or feel! If that's the only way to get on, I don't want to get on! I'm sick of it! Peace and quiet is what I want, and by George I

mean to have it, too! And a chance to study, read and learn! I don't propose to let these fellows monopolize me for the rest of my life!" A tempting picture came to him. How he would like to dynamite the whole city of New York! "Just blow it all to smithereens—and fill the sky with foreigners—little wriggling foreigners!"

But at home, as he lit his pipe and looked through the unpaid bills, little by little Peter's wrath changed into uneasiness. Kate and Susanna were asleep; he could feel their presence in the next room; and there was in the very atmosphere something that made him anxious now. For he had grown to love it here—all the more because he could be here so little. Again a wave of exasperation went through him as he thought how happy they could be if this damned money trouble were solved.

"All right, then, how am I going to do it?" For a long time, puffing his pipe, he racked his brains for an idea. At last he had a glimmer of hope. "I'll go and see Dillingham," he thought.

4.

John Dillingham was his chief at school. A short, stoop-shouldered, rugged man, grown gray in a service of twenty-odd years, his mind unlike those of some of his colleagues had kept surprisingly

open and welcoming to new ideas. He had taken a lively interest in Kate and in her China Club. She had been one of his favorite teachers. "How are Kate and the baby?" he asked; and, as he drew out of Peter some idea of the change of their lives, over his face came a look of regret, and then of curiosity. Peter had interested him from the start. A queer combination, this bird from up-State, with his passion for foreign languages.

"What's your plan for getting out of this rut?" Dillingham asked abruptly.

"Promotion," Peter answered.

"Think you can pass the examinations?"

"That's just what I want to know about," said Peter, and he reddened a bit. "The fact is," he blurted, "I've never thought of it till now. We've had our minds so set on Peking—thought we'd get off in a year or two. And we would have, too, if it hadn't been——"

"For the baby," Dillingham cut in. "I know—life's queer—goes just like that. And it's the finest thing in the world, unless you let the jolts it gives tip you over on your back. If I were you, I'd never give up that trip to China. It may be the biggest thing in your lives."

"I'm not giving it up," said Peter. "We'll get out of this——"

"But look here!" his chief interrupted. "Have

you ever stopped to think of this school—and the two thousand kids that are in it—and me?” Peter looked blank; Dillingham, grim. “Seems sometimes,” he continued, “as though every teacher in the place were thinking of nothing but getting out. Why not look around you and see what’s here—see if you can’t get a little pleasure out of this vale of tears? You want promotion, and you’re right—and I can see no reason why you shouldn’t make the 8 B grade. But try to get over this idea that the whole job is drudgery! Why not put in your hardest licks on history and geography? You’re strong there—I’ve watched your work. So I say go on and pass your exams, and get promotion with higher pay, quit this infernal tutoring, put in all your extra time on these two subjects you like best—and then it may astonish you, how your work will fill your life! And don’t forget,” he added, “that I’m right here to help you—always—all I can!”

“Thanks!” said Peter. Their talk that day acted like a tonic; and, before he had time to lose the effect, he had added a little spice by his next determination, which was, “I’ll tackle this job all alone, and give Kate the surprise of her young life! She thinks I’m pretty heavy and slow. All right, I’ll show her what I can do!” He put in every hour he could spare in work for those examinations. He cut down his sleep to four hours a night; he hid the

books that he brought home, and exulted in his secret. Then came a long, hot day in June, a day of anxious straining to answer all the questions asked; and then a morning late in July when at breakfast he tore open a letter, glanced at it and gave a laugh and tossed it over to his wife. What blank astonishment on her face!

"Peter! You're promoted!" she cried. Still laughing in low husky tones, he had risen and was walking the floor. "What do you mean," she demanded, "by doing all this without letting me know?" His reply was incoherent:

"Oh, I just—just wanted to see if I—couldn't cheer you up a bit!" Again that husky, shaky laugh. "Damned discouraging for a woman—tied for life to a dub like me—who never gets on—so I thought I'd try! I—I've worked like the devil, Kate! If I'd failed, I don't know what I'd have done!"

"You old darling!" With quick tears in her eyes, she laughed and kissed him. For a time they talked in a jubilant, senseless way, and came out of that with the sobering thought that his salary would be raised only some forty dollars a month.

"Never mind," she cried, "it's a starter—and goodness only knows where we'll stop! Besides, the wretched bills are paid, so you can drop this tutoring! And—oh Peter, I'm so proud of you!"

5.

That summer he took Kate and Susanna up to the Berkshires for a month, to visit his uncle in Pearly Gates. Peter had not been home in years, and now in his uncle's home his satisfaction with himself for his recent achievement was shaken a bit. So many memories rushed back, came at him from all over the place, demanding, "Have you gone so far? Is this all that's to come of those dreams you had?" And there was compassion and regret in Peter as he noticed how his uncle Bill had changed. Bill Gowdy at last had suffered defeat; the post office had been moved to the store of his rival down the street; and his principal hold on the world outside was broken. Retiring into himself, he had lived with his stamps and his daily chores, a lonely, surly, dark, old man. Their coming seemed to wake him up, and his slowly deepening delight in Kate and Susanna held a deal of pathos. He was so plainly anxious to please them and to keep them here.

"You're a lucky fellow," he said to Peter. "What a chance you got to live!"

He loved to talk of China to Kate, his questions seemed to have no end. He brought out his stamps; and, when she caught the romance that was in them, it warmed the cockles of his heart. While

she talked of Peking and her childhood, he sat watching her with gleaming eyes, now and then sharply nodding his head.

"You go there—go there!" he implored. "Don't be held back by nuthin' on earth! Don't let yourselves get anchored down!"

"We won't," she answered. "Oh, we won't! That's just what we are working for!"

But, as she went on to explain how Peter's promotion was right in line with their old plan, a quizzical expression came on William Gowdy's face.

"I used to say that of my post office job. Look out—or before you know it, you'll be stuck in a hole, like me—for life. . . . For life," he repeated softly. That spark of the old rebel in Bill, which had flashed up for a moment, was gone. He leaned back in his chair, a tired old man. And a chill struck into Peter and Kate.

"Shall we ever get to be like that?"

6.

It was the next autumn in New York, and it was Friday evening. Kate was putting Susanna to bed, and Peter was comfortably ensconced with a book on South America, a contented expression on his face. The week's work was over, and he had two long days to himself. No more tutoring at night.

Life was so much easier now. In her rich voice with its slight burr, Kate began singing a cradle song; and Peter glanced up listening.

As he did so, he heard a step outside and saw a letter shoved under the door. A moment longer he listened to Kate, then rose and picked the letter up, and gave a little grunt of surprise as he saw the Chinese stamp. He tore it open and read it through, his features slowly tightening. It was from the uncle of Moon Chao. The small boy had been doing splendidly, and the uncle expressed again his gratitude for the time when they had saved his nephew's life.

"I am not a wealthy man," he wrote, "but, as the years of my life go by, more and more do I feel two things. One is admiration for your great America. The other is our need of schools like those you have in your country. We already have a few schools of this kind, but they are controlled by foreigners—while our native Chinese schools cling too closely to the past. So with a few of my old friends, who are merchants and who share my views, I have collected promises of money to start a little school that shall be managed on new lines. My nephew has often told us the fable, which he learned from your honored wife, of the beggar and the bag of gold. The school must have a faith like that in China and her future. Will you come and be

our teacher? Will you bring your wife and child and make your home in China? We cannot afford to pay you well. We have so little money. But I think that I can promise you one hundred dollars every month—and living is very cheap in Peking. If you can come, we shall be glad to pay for your ticket from New York. We are hoping that you can come very soon, for unless we start the school this year I am fearful my friends will give up the plan."

There followed more expressions of gratitude and friendliness, but Peter barely took them in. Scattered visions of the East came back with a rush. He went to the bedroom.

"Kate!" he called, in a low voice.

"Oh Peter!" came an impatient whisper. "I almost had Susanna asleep! What is it?" She came to the door. Then, as she caught sight of his face, "What's the matter?"

"Nothing. Read this."

And, as she read, he watched her.

"Oh Peter, it's the chance of our lives!"

The next moment she threw an anxious look back into the bedroom. She frowned and read the letter again.

"What do you think?" she asked him slowly. He stared back at her.

"I don't know." There was a little silence, and then she said,

"Well, we'll have to think of this hard. Wait till I get Susanna asleep." She went back, and a moment later he could hear the lullaby. But there was no sleepiness now in the song, and so the small girl stayed wide awake. Over and over the song was sung, and in the singing Peter could feel, now a glad, hungry happiness, and again a sharp misgiving. And the long talk they had that night was a struggle between these two emotions.

Up with a rush came the hopes and plans of only three brief years ago. If only this chance had come to them then, how quickly they would have taken it! As they talked, unconsciously they drifted back to those early days when life had been so gloriously free from complications, and with the old eagerness they faced this suddenly opened door, looked through it into a land of dreams, excited hopes and fascinations. Peter felt the East again grow real and close as his wife talked on. It loomed immense and dazzling! As he watched her animated face, he felt how both had suddenly been lifted out of the daily rut. What a glorious light was in her eyes!

Then Susanna woke up and cried. Kate went in to her again, and Peter read the letter carefully

through a second time. "We have so little money. But I think that I can promise you one hundred dollars every month." He frowned. "He doesn't seem very sure of himself, this old Chinaman," he thought. "What do we know about him? Nothing. Suppose he doesn't stick to the plan?" He read slowly on. "We shall be glad to pay for your ticket from New York." Not tickets—ticket! He looked closely to make sure. No, there was not a sign of an s. "Then we'll have to pay for Kate's ticket ourselves!" He got the old timetables and sailing lists and figured it out. It would come to two hundred dollars at least. Peter got his check-book. He had a little over a hundred dollars in the bank, and there were a few small bills to be paid. As he bent over, figuring, Kate came out of the bedroom. She sat down limply in a chair.

"If only it hadn't come just now!" she said in a low, strained voice. "Every cold that she takes seems to go to her ears—and they have such mean winters in Peking!"

Peter watched her anxiously. He saw the old, tense, worried look that he knew so well come on her face. He felt the great chance slipping away, and he blurted out in a desperate tone,

"You've got to take chances in this life if you want to get anything worth while!"

She shot a jealous look that said, "What do you care for Susanna?" As though she had spoken, he replied, "I'm not forgetting the baby—but how about the winters here? Aren't they as bad as in Peking?"

"No," she answered. "And besides, I know the doctor here," she said. Then a change swept over her face. "Oh Peter! I want to—I want to go!" She caught sight of his check book. "How much have we in the bank?"

"About a hundred dollars."

"Good—and your next month's salary. We'd have that much to start on there."

"No, we wouldn't. It would cost us all of that to get to China," he replied; and he read that part of the letter aloud.

"Then we'd have nothing—not a cent!" Kate stared at him in dismay. "But why be so certain," she asked, "that he meant to pay for your ticket alone? It may have been just a slip, a mistake!"

For a time they anxiously discussed whether to write and ask him. "No," said Peter finally; and she sighed, "Yes, I guess you're right." There was a long silence. Peter, rumpling his hair, was restlessly moving about the room. Kate sat thinking, very still.

"We could sell our furniture, I suppose." In a

moment she added decidedly, "Yes, that's the only thing to do!" But the moment he felt her coming around, Peter himself began to draw back.

"That wouldn't go very far," he said.

"How do you know it wouldn't? What do you know about life over there? It's cheap, I tell you! And besides, there are a few clothes and things I could sell." She plunged again into thoughts of her own.

"If only I were sure," growled Peter, "that I could make a success of that school." The Chinese that he had learned was already half forgotten. "It won't be easy," he muttered. He caught a glance from his wife that said, "How terribly cautious he is! Good God! If I were only a man!" He flushed. "Not that I'm afraid of putting it through in the long run. Hard work doesn't scare me—you ought to know that. But suppose it takes two or three years before I can show any real results? And suppose this little group of Chinks, and their faith and their money, won't last that long? Then where'd we be?"

"I know—— I know——"

"You don't know! Woman fashion, you haven't half read the letter—I mean carefully! Listen to this! 'I think that I can promise you one hundred dollars every month.' He *thinks* he can."

"These Chinamen are honest, dear, they never go back on a promise!" she cried.

"But he doesn't promise! He *thinks* he can!"

"I know—— I know," she answered.

"And there's Susanna," Peter said.

"Oh, don't remind me of Susanna! I've already given her, sitting here, every sickness under the sun!" She was thinking now of babies' milk, and of oil stoves and bathrooms. "Oh, Peter, I don't see how we can go!"

"We won't settle it yet," he answered. "There may be a way. If there is, we'll find it." She looked at him wretchedly.

"Oh, if only Dad were alive!"

"If he were, he'd tell you to take a chance!" This burst from the hungry Peter beneath, desperately rousing to the fight. And the struggle began all over again—now one, now the other, holding back.

"Why not write and ask if they'll wait till spring?" she suggested.

"He says he's afraid to wait that long."

"Why shouldn't he wait, I'd like to know?"

Their talk had become a torment.

"Peter," she said at last, wearily, "it's nearly two o'clock. Let's sleep on it."

But they could not sleep. And the next morning,

Saturday, haggard and worn, they went at it again. Susanna, a sensitive, little mite, soon felt the tension in their voices; and, after a dozen times stopping her play and gazing at her parents without receiving any attention, she began to be fretful and cross; and her interruptions made discussion hopeless.

"It's no use," said Kate at last. "I'll take her out. She needs the air."

Peter made the rounds that day of many steamship offices, and he learned that since three years ago the prices of tickets had taken a jump. The same was true of railroad fares. "That almost settles it," he thought, with a kind of grim relief. But when he and Kate got together again, the old longing swept up in them both. He told her of the higher fares, and she spoke of a dressmaker's bill which she had forgotten the night before.

"How can we ever decide this right, if you keep forgetting things like that?" Peter cried impatiently.

"I'm not forgetting!"

"How do I know? How do I know there aren't *other* bills?"

In an instant they were quarreling. The tears came suddenly in Kate's eyes.

"Oh Peter, don't, don't! Here's the chance of our lives! Think what we were getting to be! Just middle aged—just settled for life! I don't

blame you, I blame myself! I've let myself get narrow and small! Oh Peter—Peter!" She was in his arms; he held her close and said huskily,

"No—you're not to blame, Kate—it's my infernal slowness! We ought to have been there long ago! But we'll get out of this—we'll find a way! Let's try to be big and sensible, and look at it quietly."

So they went over it all again, and they both tried to steady down; but, when in reading the letter Peter tore it slightly, she cried, "Look out!" as though he had struck her. With all its possibilities the letter was sheer magic now. Gathering her memories, Kate was eagerly telling him of the sort of little Chinese house and garden they might live in. Then she had a sudden idea, and looked at him a moment in silence.

"There's only one thing to do," she said. "It's funny we haven't thought of it before."

"What's that?"

"You must go first alone."

He stared at her.

"You could leave me a little money," she said, "and I could try some work at school."

"You'll do no such thing!" Peter broke in harshly. "You're not strong enough. Have you forgotten what the doctor told you?"

"Oh rubbish! I'm as well as you are now! And besides, you might be able to send a part of your salary home!"

"Might, might? There you are again! Can't you see that there's nothing certain about it? Suppose I failed—then where'd you be? And I'd feel that, and I'd worry to death—not only about my end of it but yours, too! I'd never be sure that you were all right! It would simply double our chances of trouble—me over there and you over here—about eight thousand miles apart!"

"But other people do it!" she cried. "Look at the immigrants in New York! Almost every one of them leaves his family behind!"

"I'm not a Jew!" snapped Peter.

"They love their families, Peter."

"I tell you I'm not going alone—Jew or no Jew! And the minute you look at facts as they are, you'll agree that I am right. How the devil could I make a start over there? It's been you we've counted on from the start—you and your knowledge of Chinese—and of the whole country, and how to get on. Send me traipsing over there all by myself—to teach a lot of little Chinks, in a language I don't even know? What do you think I am? A god?" He marched over to the Buddha in the corner and held out his hand. "How do you do?" he said gravely. "We're regular fellahs, you and I!"

"But Peter!" she cried, laughing. "You *can* speak the language—already quite a little! And you're wonderful at that—and with my help, in a month or two—and another month on the journey, besides——"

"Oh, yes," he answered wrathfully. "All I need is a pigtail and a dressing gown! They'd take me for a native then!"

"My dear," she said, decidedly. "I know just what I'm talking about. I've been there—I know what they want—and I know that you could do it. They wouldn't expect too much at first."

"I tell you I won't go without you!" Peter's angry, sharp dismay was only made the more acute by a voice from deep within himself that cried, "Try it—all alone!" Impatiently he shook it off and laid all his emphasis on how he would worry over there for Kate and Susanna in New York.

Nearly all that night, and Sunday, too, they kept trying to decide—tortured, tempted, giving up, then coming back, still balancing. And this was repeated Monday night. At last she said, in a desperate way,

"Now Peter, we've talked and talked till we're sick! We'll never be any better able to decide than now! Let's make up our minds one way or the other!"

"All right."

"And I think we'd better go!"

"All right," said Peter. She looked at him, drew a resolute breath.

"And that you'd better go first alone." A moment he looked back at her.

"All right." He saw her flinch at that. But she added sharply.

"And let's write the letter now!"

"All right." He sat down, and with her help he wrote accepting the offer.

"Now mail it—mail it, Peter!" A dangerous tension was in her voice. "Mail it so that we can't change!"

She almost pushed him out of the door. As he started to go down the stairs, he stopped abruptly, clenched his hands—for he heard a burst of sobs behind.

"All right," he muttered grimly.

But when he came to the letter box down on Second Avenue, he stopped again. In the hard, brilliant glare of light on the broad thoroughfare, laughing, quarreling, chattering, the crowds swept by; and he had a bleak consciousness of being terribly alone. "Who cares what I do, or where I go? Nobody but Kate. How she broke down, the minute that I left the room! How will she ever get on by herself?" Savagely he started away, walking rapidly with his big hands clenched tight

and cold in his overcoat pockets. "I tell you she's right! We've done thinking enough!" But the pictures came, they crowded back. Himself in China—Kate here in New York. "Suppose I'm right about her strength? The doctor said she'd never be strong! Suppose she overworks herself, gets sick and dies?" Cold sweat came on his forehead. He went into a café and had a cup of coffee. He came out feeling better; and as he walked on, the city, his home, his wife and child and his steady job had never seemed so desirable. It fitted him so! "I'm that sort of man! Why run off to something I don't want, when what I do want is right here?"

It was late when he entered their flat. Kate had gone to bed. Wearily, with his overcoat on, Peter sank into a chair. Presently he reached for his pipe. How he loved the familiar room and all the life that had been here since Kate and he moved into it. He noticed on the table the book he had been reading Friday night when the letter came; and, as he recalled his comfortable anticipation of a week end, two days of peace and quiet, Peter gave a little snort. A fine week end they had made of it! But his indignation was soon merged in the feeling of security and relief that was fast deepening now. The stolid Peter of every day was getting hold of the situation. How nicely life had been

working out—Kate and Susanna steadily gaining both in health and happiness, Peter himself by good hard work winning his first promotion in school.

“And why the devil,” he suddenly asked, “did we forget, in all this talk, that we’re going to China anyhow? It’s only a matter of a few years. There’ll be other chances—when we’re good and ready, too—while now by going off half cocked I may fail over there and spoil our whole lives!”

“If you don’t go now, you never will!” a desperate voice within him cried. He gave another angry snort, frowned and got up. He was stiff and sore. The room was getting cold. He went to his desk, tore up the letter he was to have mailed and wrote another quickly. His hat and overcoat were still on. He went out and mailed the letter, came back, undressed and went to bed.

7.

The next morning he awoke with a start, at the sound of Susanna’s voice. The light was still dim in the room, but the little girl was chattering. For an hour he lay rigid there. Then, as the light grew stronger, Kate noticed his wide open eyes.

“Did you mail it?” she asked abruptly. A moment he looked back at her.

“No,” he said. “I wrote another. I said I

couldn't take it now, but that later if they——" He stopped short. She had turned away. The swift look she had given him went into Peter like a knife.

"It's not too late," he heard her say. "If you want to, you can write again."

"It's decided, I tell you!" he replied. Angrily he dressed himself, gobbled his breakfast and went to school.

"Isn't that just like a woman!" Peter thought indignantly. "She was as undecided as I—yet she'll put the blame for this all on me! She manœvered and manœvered till she got it just this way. She put the whole business right on me! I was to be the one to go! I was to write the letter! I was to mail it! She went to bed! But before I could get out of the flat she broke down and let me hear her sobs, gave me *them* to take along!" But later something honest and blunt in Peter rose and answered, "Yes, but when all's said and done she was the one who did decide, she did try to shove it through!" He pictured her at home that day, bitterly disappointed. Peter's feeling of guilt increased, and several times the question came, "Shall I write again this evening?" His suspense and worry grew, and it was with a poignant dread that he came into their flat that night.

And a feeling of glad surprise and a little disillusionment, too, came to Peter as he saw the expres-

sion on Kate's face. For he found her looking immensely relieved—as though some danger had been faced and put behind them. There was no mistaking it in her voice, as she laughed and talked about the way they had tormented themselves.

"I don't see how I could have considered it, even for a moment!" she cried. "I've been out and bought a dear little frock for Susanna to make up for it—the way I was willing to risk her life, on a wild goose chase around the world. Thank Heaven, you had sense enough to see it and change the letter in time. I can't think what possessed me to urge it so!"

Whatever had possessed her, god or devil, was now gone; and Peter saw the same sensible practical mother and wife that had run his home a week ago, and in managing to make ends meet had grown utterly engrossed in her husband and her child. The letter seemed unreal as a dream.

"But it could have been real. It could have been the beginning of such different lives," he thought, with a last little twinge of regret. He wondered if she were not thinking the same, and whether all this glad relief were not simply a mask she had put on, to hide from him the fact that he had had his first big chance for the fulfillment of their dream, and had let it slip away from him.

CHAPTER III.

I.

WHEN again, the summer following, they went up to Pearly Gates to visit William Gowdy, Peter rather dreaded what his sardonic relative might say of that letter episode. But when he spoke of it one day, his uncle turned and looked away down into the valley, and listened in silence to the end.

"I'm feelin' pretty old, these days," was his gruff, low comment. "Glad that you and Kate and Susanna ain't on t'other side of the world. Sorry you missed the chance, of course—but it seems to run in the family. We want things an' we want things—but when it comes to takin' a chance, what small potatoes most of us be. . . . That's been my life," he ended. "Anyhow I'm glad you're here."

There was something very appealing in the shaggy, grey, old man as he stared down into the valley then. And so Kate said softly:

"Oh Uncle, we're so happy to be with you in this dear old house."

From that day on, in a hungry way, as though he felt it might be his last opportunity, Bill Gowdy made the most of their visit. Susanna was nearly four years old, and he liked to go about with her or sit and smoke and watch her play. And he had long talks with Peter and Kate, talks that rambled all over the earth.

Into these talks from time to time came the news of our brief war with Spain. From the day of the Rough Riders' charge, early in the summer, old Bill had taken a keen delight in Roosevelt's rapid rise to fame.

"The first feller I ever come across with the gump-tion in him to break away from everything that holds him back," Bill declared emphatically. "Look at what his life has been. To begin with, he's a weakling—sick half the time. So what does he do? Sit down and whine about it? No. Goes out to a ranch in the West, by George, and gets himself as strong as a bull. It was a case of kill or cure. Then back he comes into New York an' hits it like the Equinox—shakes up the whole Police Force, like a terrier with a rat. Then he grabs the Civil Service, an' the Navy after that—puts teeth in 'em both! Then off to Cuba! Ginger! Snap! You mark my words! There's nuthin' this side of Kingdom Come that can hold that young man down!"

Just before Peter went back to the city, Roosevelt swung up through the State on his campaign for the governorship. Peter and his uncle heard him speak at a county fair, and later on their long drive home they talked excitedly of the speech. Peter had been thrilled to the core by the vitality of the man. The village seemed a lonely place when they came back to it that night. At supper with Kate they talked of the speech, but Peter could feel Bill Gowdy's voice grow gruff and dull with sleepiness, and he himself felt drowsy, too. It was as though they had both been charged with some mysterious, vital force, but now it was ebbing fast away. After supper, he picked up a book, and his uncle went out to the barn, which was just across the road. Peter heard a wagon stop outside, but he went on reading drowsily. Suddenly the door flew open and Uncle Bill glared into the room.

"Come on out here!" he whispered.

"What's happened?" Peter followed him out; and there by the light of a lantern he saw a smiling, scowling face that made him give a violent start.

"Roosevelt!"

"Yes! Hello—hello!" Leaning out of the mountain wagon, genially showing his teeth, the hero of San Juan snapped out, "Any newspaper men come through this way?"

"Not that I know of."

"Then they're lost. How far is it to Danville?"

"About nine miles."

"By George! And I've got to speak there at eight o'clock!"

In a daze Peter heard the rest of it. One of the horses had gone lame, and a fresh team was wanted. Bill Gowdy proudly offered his, and in a jiffy Roosevelt was making with Peter for the barn. Just how together they got out the team, found the harness and threw it on, Peter could never clearly recall. His uncle and the driver had unhitched the other team, and with a hearty "Thank you, boys—come and see me next year in Albany!" the Colonel climbed back into the wagon. A wave of his hand; and the wagon, with a lantern swinging beneath, was going rapidly down the road. Quivering, Peter stood there and watched the receding speck of light.

He felt a wave of restlessness and dissatisfaction with himself. "While I am teaching history, here's a man who's making it!" With a little glow he thought how he would tell of this meeting to his history class at school. But then the deep, deep restlessness came again upon him. Suddenly he asked himself, "I wonder if I couldn't write a life of Roosevelt—clear and simple—meant for boys?" The name of Roosevelt was still new; no such book had

yet appeared; and if it were written right it might find its way into thousands of schools, East and West, all over the land! What a chance! What doors it opened wide! Looking back over his life he saw that in those two favorite subjects of his, history and geography, what he had always hated was the classroom drudgery. Here was an escape from that, a chance to make the beginning at least of a name as a biographer. "Here's what I've always wanted to do! To write!" he thought excitedly. As he turned it over in his mind, he walked slowly back and forth on the road between the house and the barn, until the village clock struck twelve.

And later, as he got into bed, Peter was rather proud of himself for having walked up and down so long.

He tried the idea the next day on his wife. Kate drew a quick breath and said,

"Oh Peter! I wonder if you could?"

They talked little else for the next few days; and, after they returned to New York, Peter spent his evenings planning the book and piling up notes. Each morning brought new headlines about "the Colonel" in the press—new catch words, national ideals, jokes and trenchant, pointed tales. Hungrily Peter gathered them in. There came the tingling memory of that evening in the barn. And when

Roosevelt was elected, Peter and Kate had a jubilant night. Somehow they felt as though they themselves had come a big step up in life.

2.

After that, the work on the book slowed down. All through the following winter he kept gathering material, but he had to do most of his work at night, when he was already tired after the long day in school. So the months wore slowly on. Kate had given up asking when he meant to start his book. "It will only worry him," she thought. Moreover, her life was full enough. The cost of living was up again, and she could barely meet the bills. Through their old friend, Dillingham, she had been able to get Susanna into the kindergarten at his school. Kate went with her every day; and Dillingham, that autumn, began to give her various jobs, paying her out of a private fund he had from a few people up-town. This work soon made a difference. She began to be a little late, from early morning until night. Through the school, she was rapidly making new friends, and she often asked them to supper now. People liked her and she knew it; and with keen amusement she saw how at first putting Peter down as dull, they came to see their mistake.

So Kate's crowded life went on. Several times

that winter, she had little breakdowns, but she managed to pull through without a doctor. She kept Susanna at home, those days, and they had fine times when Kate was sick, treating it all as a capital joke.

Then in March, after a long stretch of wet, beastly weather, Susanna caught an ugly cold. It went to her ears and within a few days both mastoids were affected. An operation saved her life; but, when at last the danger was past, Kate crumpled up one evening, and was in bed for over a month. Once more, when she got up again, she tried to go on with her work at school. But Peter put an end to it. Back to the doctor he made her go.

"No use, Mrs. Wells. I'm sorry, but your heart won't stand it!" that gentleman said emphatically. With a hunted look, she cried,

"Then I'll make a heart that will!"

"Good," he replied. "But remember that doing all your housework and looking after a delicate child is not exactly a rest cure."

"I don't want a rest cure! I want a good, sane, common sense, work-and-will cure!" she replied. "I'm barely twenty-eight years old!"

The next two years were one long fight to regain her old vitality. Weeks and months of vigilance, looking after her home and her daughter, planning her day, inventing work-savers. Slowly, with a glad return of her self-confidence, she could feel her

strength again. Then one little slip, or a stretch of bad weather, and back she would go. At such times Peter would find his wife passing rapidly from fits of blues to bursts of impatience and revolt.

"Oh I'm sorry, Peter—but I simply won't give in and make up my mind to settle down as the invalid of the story-books—shedding beams of resignation—uncomplaining—all that rot! I won't, I tell you, and I can't! I'm bitter about it—just plain mad! Why couldn't my mother have told me more about having babies—the danger of getting up too soon! I'm bitter about it! I want so much! We're young, you and I, with our lives ahead—just opening! And I'm hungry! Do you know what a beggar really is? Not a pauper—he's too far gone to beg, there's nothing he really wants enough! A beggar is a fellow like me—hungry, hungry—and held back!" The next moment, sobbing violently and trembling, as he held her tight, she got hold of herself, and laughed and murmured, "Oh Peter, you poor dear—what a wife! But give me time and you will see!"

So the struggle went on again. To make up for the money Kate had earned, and which they sorely needed now, Peter had long ago gone back to the night work he hated so; and, as he trudged the dirty streets, often worried about his wife and anxious for the future, perplexed and baffled in a town which

was now all harsh and guttural, grasping, rasping on his nerves—he felt his whole existence narrow to this steady grind, and “The Boy’s Roosevelt” slip away. At times, as he read in the news of the day of what “the Colonel” was up to now, Peter would grow bitter against this preacher of “the strenuous life.”

“How does he know how it feels to be like me, walled in on all sides? And I can’t break through! I’m the plodding kind—God damn it—I’m slow!” And he could see no light ahead.

3.

Early one warm evening in April, 1900, climbing several flights of stairs in a dark, old tenement and knocking at the door of a pupil, he got no answer, knocked again and heard a strained, sharp voice reply in Yiddish,

“Come in!”

Peter’s pupil, a young Galician Jew, was sitting with his head in his hands bowed over the kitchen table. He glared up at his visitor; then down went his head as before. “What the devil is wrong?” thought Peter. He could see that the young Galician was quivering from head to foot. Peter had never liked the lad. He called himself a socialist, and was perfecting his English in order to speak in public;

but often, forgetting his lesson and lapsing into Yiddish, he would thunder oratorical economics. Peter took little stock in his talk. But tonight, as he made a move to go, he heard a groan from the table.

"What's the matter with you?" Peter asked. The other looked up.

"My wife!" he cried. "She's left me!"

"Has, eh?" Peter remembered her now—a pretty young Jewess getting fat, wearing tight corsets and high heeled shoes. "Where's she gone?" he asked. The pupil leaped up and seized his arm.

"I will show you where she is!" And in spite of Peter's protestations that he did not care to know, the half-crazed boy insisted on taking him to the window. At that time vice was advertised, not discreetly, as today, but frankly as in a mining camp. In one of several narrow, dirty, brownstone buildings down the street, all the rooms were lighted; at some of the windows the shades were up, and a group of little boys outside kept eagerly pointing out the sights.

"That's where she is!" her husband said; and he burst out against his wife. "She was always kicking and nagging me to give up socialism," he cried, "and put the money I gave to the Cause into hats and clothes for her! Last week she wanted a new

chemise! Another five spot! Y'understand? The chemise of capitalism! That's what gets 'em—glitter and flash! She wanted to go to theatres and bum dances every night! And while I was out at night, working for the Party, God knows what she was doing here! I know—oy, oy—I know damn well! That house I showed you—y'understand?—she never got there all at a jump! She couldn't—it's too rotten! She must have had some fellers first—got used to it! Y'understand?" He clutched his head, walked up and down. "Oy, oy, oy! While I was working for great ideas—the freedom of the masses, the toiling proletariat!"

In broken, furious phrases he went on to picture how he had worked and sacrificed. Peter gave little heed to him now, he was looking for a chance to escape; but, when he made a move to go, the youngster seized him by the arm.

"Listen—you!" He jerked Peter around. "You ain't listening—you're just letting me talk! But by God I'll make you listen!" he cried. "I'll make you a socialist tonight!" His words came in a torrent now; and all of New England was in the look of grim but rather startled dislike on Peter's heavy features.

"You are a teacher!" the youngster cried. "Well, what can you teach at a time like this? Whose

fault was it? What made her a bitch? Do you know? You ought to know. You're paid to know!" Peter flushed and rose.

"I'm not paid such a lot, young man!" The dark face of the boy lit up.

"That's just it! You ain't paid but a pittance! They won't let you have the time and money to study and get onto the lies they make you teach! Do I say it's your fault? Not on your life! I know you have a wife and kid, and sickness, worry, day and night! What chance you got to study, read, make trips to Europe, broaden out? Shouldn't a teacher have all that? Shouldn't he be like the high priest of the whole damn bunch of us? Don't they say so in all their talk of their Holy-to-God Democracy? The school is the foundation stone! They shout it every Fourth of July! You bet it is, and they know it is! They know the whole rotten business rests on keeping the people fooled from the cradle up. So fool the kids! Give 'em beggars for teachers! To support your family, you've got to run around nights doing this, when you ought to be learning to open your eyes! You don't know what the world could be—not even what you could be yourself, if you only had a chance! The blame ain't in you or any of us, but in the system! Y'understand? Just give us a chance an' what *couldn't* we be! Oh God! Don't you know? Ain't you felt it inside?"

"Yes—I've felt it," Peter said, with suddenly arrested eyes.

"So have I! It's in us all! But under this rotten system of theirs it can't come up, it's all kept down! Every man has it—y'understand?—every man you see on the street—no matter how dirty or poor he is! An' don't you forget it! Believe in men! Believe in men—an' it will come out of 'em! Y'understand?"

All at once his head went down on the table, clutched in his hands, and his whole thin body shook with sobs. Presently Peter laid his hand on the boy's quivering shoulder.

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-one!"

"Where are your friends?"

"I don't want any friends! I want to die!"

"Look here, son," said Peter, "you come right along with me."

He got the boy's hat, took him tight by the arm and led him down into the street; and, questioning him as to his friends, he walked the young radical up town to a small brick house on a quiet street in the edge of the foreign quarter. They went through a little book shop to a couple of rooms behind. A small socialist school was quartered there. In one room, a class was going on; and in the other, at a desk, sat a large, quiet woman of middle age, with a face which rather to Peter's surprise was not foreign.

but American. She spoke with an accent of the West. Her name was Anna Blainey. "What's the trouble?" she asked. And, when she had learned the gist of it, her broad, strong features tightened in a maternal sort of way.

"I'm sorry for you, Comrade. You'd better sleep here tonight," she said. Presently she sent him upstairs; and as Peter turned to leave, she said, "Thank you, friend, for bringing him here. How did you find him?" Peter explained. "You teach in a public school?" she asked.

"Yes." She gave an inquiring look.

"I was a teacher too," she said. "But I gave it up. How about you? Are you satisfied?" He hesitated.

"Not entirely——"

"Why not? You've worked hard enough—I can see that; and you look like a man of high ideals. No doubt you had them, at one time, about education. But grinding away for years and years, your ideals have been starved. Isn't that true?" Her voice had the tone of a lecturer now, but was still low and quiet, and genuine like her grey eyes. "Now who's to blame?" she continued. "Has it been your fault? What opportunity have you had to broaden yourself?" And she went on. With a steady force of conviction that caught Peter's interest, she gave him her picture of men kept down, not by faults within themselves, but by tremendous

forces outside. Something stirred in Peter at this conception of human life, but instinctively he held back.

"It sounds too easy," he put in. "If you think a man can get or do anything worth while in life without his being willing to buckle down and work like a dog——"

"I don't think that," she interrupted, with a smile. "Take a look at me," she said. "Don't I look as though I had worked?"

"Yes," he admitted.

"And looking at you I can say the same," she continued quietly. "But the difference between us is that you're working for something you've lost faith in—it leads nowhere any more; while I'm working for something, all hope and faith, a world religion—and I know that in all countries millions of people are doing the same—and that our work leads to a new freedom for the entire human race. In every land, every city and town, and in every ship at sea, there are men and women who believe this, and who work for it, dream of it!"

When he left a little later, she asked him to come back to the school.

"You're not a man to be afraid. Come and see what we are doing," she said.

Peter walked home with a scowl on his face. He was disturbed and excited. "Shall I dig into this?"

he asked. The hard, lean years he had been through had laid his mind open to what he had heard. Looking back over his life, he asked, "Haven't I got it in me? Haven't I felt it, again and again? And am I to blame? Haven't I tried? Haven't I worked like a bull pup from start to finish?" Suppose there was some truth in her talk? In every country, city, village, every ship upon the seas! By George, the thing was big enough, unless she lied. "No, I don't believe she did!" Plunging both hands in his overcoat pockets, Peter walked on with his head down—as the vast, turgid, gleaming vista, which had appeared to so many millions, opened up before him now. "It's all mixed up with a lot of damn moonshine!" he growled. And he wondered what Kate would say to it.

As she listened to him that night, throwing in an occasional question, into her eyes came an anxious look, but she kept them on her sewing. She had been steadily gaining of late; for weeks she had not had a relapse. But she felt something in Peter's talk that again would halt them on their road. "We'll have trouble if he goes into this," she thought, but she would not oppose it. "I know nothing about it yet, so I mustn't try to stop him."

"Well, what do you think?" he asked her bluntly. For a moment she sewed in silence.

"Why—I think it seems to interest you, and it

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may have a good deal in it," she said. "But you know very little about it so far. I'd look into it further, if I were you."

A few nights later, he went back to Anna Blainey in her school. She gave him a warm welcome, loaned him several socialist books and invited him to join a class. But Peter was no economist, and he found the stuff they studied so dry and so bewildering that at the end of a few weeks he would have been quite ready to stop, were it not for the deep intensity here. Though it was all strange and new to him, raw and arrogant and half blind, it had a power of hope and faith that made these callow boys and girls of the modern city slave for it. He saw them come in as new recruits, hesitating, questioning, with the cynical eyes of the town. In a few weeks he saw them changed, sacrificing their last cent. And soon, responding to this faith, which had a greater driving force than any he'd ever felt before, he put in every hour he could spare from the grind to meet the bills at home.

His new intensity reached its height one evening in the following autumn. The campaign of 1900 was near its end, and through the dense crowds on the lower East Side a big truck slowly ploughed its way. There came roaring waves of sound: "Debs! Debs! Eugene V. Debs!" There came amazing silences. And in one of these, when the

uncle listened all intent. Then Peter could feel him slipping back. For a long time there was silence. At last, in a hard, unnatural mumble, "Been a long life," his uncle said. Staring up at the ceiling as before, his eyes seemed roving over the years. With a frown he came back to the present, and made a great effort to speak again.

"Don't let Kate—bring Susanna. Funeral cheap. No fuss'n feathers. . . . Find my will—top bureau drawer. . . . Stamp collection!" Those last words came out with a jerk, sharp and clear. The black eyes, with an energy that made them fierce and bright once more, were fixed on Peter's. Scowling in the effort to speak, his whole visage tightened, twisting: "Stamp collection! Your big chance!" The words, in a thick whisper, came like an imploring cry. He tried to go on, but with a sudden tightening of his hand on Peter's he relaxed and fell unconscious. By the morning he was dead.

Then Kate came. There was the funeral. And later Peter had a talk with his uncle's lawyer. There was barely money enough to bury old Bill and pay his debts. "He has left the house and farm to you," the lawyer said, "but they won't bring much. If you want to hang on to the property, maybe I can get you a tenant." Peter at once agreed to that. They lingered a little in the house, selecting a few things Kate had liked and packing them to be sent to New

York. The stamp collection had grown to be an affair of four big albums. Peter took them with him. On the train, he repeated his uncle's last words, and for some time they tried to puzzle out his meaning. Then Kate asked,

"Peter! Is it worth much?"

He looked back at her:

"Sell it, you mean?"

"He may have meant that."

In New York, Peter had it valued; and, surprised at the result, he took it around from place to place, and went home that evening with an offer of thirty-one hundred dollars. On hearing the news, Kate stared at him with tears coming quickly to her eyes.

"Poor old uncle. A big chance. He had dreamed of it all his life—and now he's giving it to you."

"A chance for what?" asked Peter. At the low, strained tone of his voice, she shot a quick look at him, disturbed and questioning. Suddenly both remembered how wide apart they had drifted of late. Again and again he had tried to gain her support for his new radical views—but without success; and the widening gap had made them both unhappy. They did not want to face it now.

"Your big chance," Kate said softly. "I wonder what he meant by that?"

As they talked about him, the memories kept piling in—of Bill Gowdy's early dream and his lonely,

tall bald-headed leader who was loved by millions sent over the crowds the slogan: "Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains! You have a world to conquer!"—Peter looked far up the street, deep, narrow, dark and glamorous, with a thousand window eyes. He saw the shadowy mass below; he felt a tightening in his throat, and a tremendous passion rising up within him.

4.

He came home cold and tired out, and found Kate in the bedroom, packing his bag. A telegram had come for him from the doctor up at Pearly Gates. "Your uncle William Gowdy has had a stroke. He wants you. Come at once. Do not wait." As Peter stared at the message, he heard Kate's voice:

"There's just time to catch the midnight train. Don't miss it, dear; you must start at once. Poor old man," she added, "how terribly lonely he must be!"

"Yes," said Peter softly. He was trembling from head to foot. Seeing the look upon his face, she came to him.

"Oh, I'm so sorry for you, dear. If he's worse tomorrow, telegraph and I'll come at once."

On the train that night, the whole perspective

of his life abruptly changing, Peter was carried rapidly back into the hills where he'd been a boy. They rose about him covered with snow, white phantoms in the starlit night, evoking scenes and faces, dreams. He still felt numb, he could not think. The change had been so sudden. Brief, scattered recollections came, of that dark mass of people surging through the tenement streets. "Workers of the world, unite!" Then all that slipped far behind, as though it were in another life. With a rush, his thoughts and feelings came back to his uncle Bill—and, glancing repeatedly at his watch, he cursed the train for its long delays. . . . It was still dark when he walked with his bag rapidly up the village street. The place was ghostly and unreal. White snow, dark, silent houses beneath the steel blue autumn sky. There was a light in his uncle's house, and Peter found a woman there.

"It took him two days back," she said. "But nobody knew it till yesterday, when I noticed there wa'n't any smoke comin' from his chimney."

On his bed, with rough, slow breathing, shaggy, grim and paralyzed, Bill Gowdy stared up at the ceiling. When Peter came in, his small black eyes turned slowly; dull and glazed at first, they began to brighten and gleam with light. Peter sat down and took his hand, and began to talk to him quietly. As he gave him the news of Kate and Susanna, his

rebel life, of his forlorn failure to break away from the chains of habit that bound him down, and then of Peter's dream and Kate's and their swift coming together, Moon Chao and the chance to go to Peking.

"That may have been the chance he meant," said Peter. For a moment they could almost hear his voice: "Go there! It's the chance of your lives!" But a cloud of regret came over Kate's face.

"I wonder if it isn't too late? We're—so much more settled now. There's Susanna—there are so many things." She looked at Peter with anxious eyes. "Oh I'd like to go!" she exclaimed. "But somehow it doesn't—sound just like us any more!"

"No—it doesn't," he replied. For some time longer they talked on.

"Oh I don't know," she sighed at last. "I guess we'll just have to wait and see. But remember, Peter, this is for you."

"No," he replied, "he didn't mean that. He meant a chance for all of us."

As he lay awake that night, he tried hard to think it out. A part of the money he would have liked to put into Anna Blainey's school, but he dismissed the plan at once, as unfair to his uncle and to Kate. She had had a hard time of it, that fall; for in the campaign he had given up much of his tutoring, and they were again in debt. He decided

now to pay the bills that had worried her so, and to make her buy some clothes and take life easier all around. Part of the money must go to that. Then again he thought of the socialist school; but it was as though the spirit of his grim old uncle were haunting him, saying, "Quit all this wild radical talk and do something to get ahead! Think of Kate and Susanna, and take this chance I'm giving you!" His thoughts kept turning to that chance—the old torment of the open door.

All at once he remembered the Roosevelt book. His uncle would have approved of that. "Suppose I use some of this money to get time to write," he thought. It did not sound very exciting at first; but for that very reason it appealed to him. It was safe. "I needn't give up my position at school. All I need is to get rid of this infernal tutoring and be free to write at night. And if I can make this book a success, it will give me a name and I can go on to other biographies for boys. What have I wanted all my life? History and geography—not just classroom drudgery but a chance to do original work, and be free to study, travel about!" How the vistas opened up that night. And reading through his Roosevelt notes, in the weeks that followed, the warm generous force of the man began to stir him as before. Roosevelt, much against his will, had been made Vice-President. But was he

letting himself be buried, as his enemies had hoped? Far from it! With his old delight, Peter chuckled as he read the news of him from day to day. Already he had his first chapter, the meeting with Roosevelt that frosty night when they harnessed the team in Bill Gowdy's barn. "A close-up picture of the man that will hit every boy between the eyes! And I'll keep it like that clear through the book! No hero bunkum! The man as he is! I've learned a lot in these last months; I can write now with eyes wide open, to his strong points and his faults. He has enough of 'em, God knows. But what was it that appealed to me in this whole socialist point of view? Revolt against things as they are, and belief in what's in all of us. And Roosevelt in his own way is working right along those lines!"

So Peter tried to reconcile his new plan with his radical views. But back in Anna Blainey's school he found them bitter against T. R. Plainly they were jealous of any progressive force than their own. And he felt their small intolerance. Meanwhile, a talk with Dillingham did much to clear up Peter's mind. His old chief called him in one day and asked,

"Are you still doing any work in that little socialist school?"

"Yes," said Peter, with a slight start. "How did you learn that I was there?"

"From some people up-town," the other answered drily. "They want me to fire you. But I guess you know me better than that."

"Thanks," said Peter gruffly.

"No thanks about it," the old man said. "If I had my way, I'd have socialist clubs right here in the building—give 'em rooms to meet in at night. What's false is bound to be shown up, and the truth there is in it can do us no harm. We're not perfect yet, God knows. We haven't even got to the point where we give the kids a fair and decent start in life; a 'square deal,' as Teddy calls it. But speaking of Teddy," he went on, "reminds me of that book of yours. Why don't you tackle it again?"

"I'm thinking of that," said Peter.

"Good! Kate was in, the other day. She told me of that legacy and asked my advice. We talked you over from A to Izzard, and came to the conclusion that the book was your best chance."

"She didn't tell me," Peter said. His old chief chuckled.

"That's like Kate. She thought it would be better to let you come to it yourself. Now how do you mean to go about it?"

Soon in a rapid hungry way Peter was talking of the book. When he had finished, Dillingham said, "Well, this all sounds good to me. I tell you, boy, in these next months you're going to feel like a new

man! You'll live in a new world—Teddy's world—of vigor, hope, vitality! Get into it—get into *him*—get way in under the skin of the man! Try to think as he thinks and feel as he feels! Get thousands of little things in his life, that you'll never write but which will be there and make you feel him, real, alive!"

Later in their talk he asked, "How do you mean to get time for this?"

"By cutting out all night work—tutoring and night school, too—and giving my evenings to the book."

"That won't do," said Dillingham. "You'd better give up all teaching and put in your whole time on it." Peter gave an anxious frown:

"I've thought of that, but it's too big a risk! If I quit school, it means we'll spend nearly all this money in a year! I've my family to think about!"

But when he spoke of it to Kate that night, she warmly supported Dillingham's plan.

"You've got to give up school," she said. "I've been a teacher myself, and I know. After a long day's teaching, you feel as though you'd been beaten by sticks! And if you're going to write this book you can't afford to feel like that! You must start in the morning and give the whole day, the very best that is in you! Oh Peter, you'll succeed in this—I can just feel it in my bones! And then you'll go

on to other books! Stop worrying over Susanna and me! I'm not going to be sick any more—why Peter, dearie, I'm strong!" she cried. "Think what it will mean—for all of us! Risk it, Peter—take the chance!"

A few weeks longer he held back; but toward the end of the winter, he resigned his position at school, and within a few days he was at work, in the old Astor Library.

5.

It was such a new life to Peter Wells, this glorious start in the morning, fresh, with a whole day for the work he loved. He had begun no writing yet. For the present he was rabid to read, to take in and absorb, let the fancies rise. It was as though he had come abruptly into a gleaming inner world where nothing was impossible. And looming in the foreground, closer, bigger, day by day, rose the figure of the man who had sent his name like a magic force spreading swiftly over the land. The gold in him, the human gold, the warm rich humanity! To keep up with him, what a race it was! While digging into his boyhood growth, Peter would be overwhelmed by a fresh mass of material out of the papers and magazines, Roosevelt's doings in a month! Yielding himself and leaving behind the

memories of his own little career, struggles, failures and mistakes, he was swept up into the life of this big American; and reading, thinking, talking, breathing, dreaming Roosevelt, thrilling intimations came of how it must *feel* to be like that!

At home by the hour he talked with Kate, who was an eager listener. Already she had begun again to scrimp and save, to eke out their small legacy and make it last the longer. But summer came, with the hot days, and Peter insisted that she and Susanna go to the seashore for two months. Alone in the city he worked on. And then slowly came a change. It was all very fine to read and take in; but when he tackled his mass of notes, to sort them out and sift them down, in the growing perplexity of it all he lost that exultant glow. At the desk in the old library, the lean, tall official there faced him with discouraged eyes that seemed to ask: "What can you do? You're only one of hundreds who have come here to write great books and have failed. What a waste of time." In exasperation, Peter now began to write. But what false, stilted, awful stuff! Teddy? A mere mannikin! Humor? A few forced guffahs! Savagely he tore it up and tried again—again, again!

When Kate returned, she asked at once how the book was getting on. "Oh it's beginning to shape up." She caught the anxiety in his voice, and they

were not happy together that night; her attempts to clear the atmosphere failed. For back of all their thinking loomed two grim facts—they had spent a third of their money, and the book refused to start.

Then came a tremendous shock. McKinley shot by an anarchist! A few days later he was dead, and Peter's hero had become President of the United States! In the excitement of it all, Peter almost forgot his work. Then back he came. "Now!" he thought. How the opportunity for such a book had been increased! That autumn by sheer force of will he ground out chapter after chapter. But the Roosevelt of his dreams had receded far away; and in his place, in Peter's book, stood a grotesque and clumsy image—"like a snow man made by kids!" he growled. Where was the warm reality? Reaching out, as it were, in a savage appeal for the old T. R., Peter would feel him coming back; but the moment he tried to write him down, once more his mind would seem to lock and the living stuff grow stiff and cold. Doggedly going back to the work, all day until the library closed, often forgetting to stop for meals, he came home late, blue and depressed; and, through long nights when he could not sleep, a deep, sardonic, inner self rose up and laughed at his struggles.

"You'll fail in this! And it's your last chance! You'll fail and settle, down and down!"

He could feel Kate's anxious watching—now silent and now throwing in small casual suggestions. In their talk one night a question rose about Roosevelt's early life. When had he first used a gun?

"Why not write him and ask?" said Kate. And in a few moments, flushed and excited, crying, "Then let's do it now!" she had Peter at the desk; and they wrote and re-wrote the letter that night.

"Now, Peter, go out and mail it!"

He gave a slight start, and so did she. An old memory flashed into their minds. He turned away, but a moment later he faced her with a quizzical smile.

"Hadn't you better go with me this time, and make sure of it, Kate?" he asked. She laughed and came quickly into his arms.

"Peter, dear, I could wring your neck!"

"No, you couldn't, Kate, it's too heavy and stiff—all muscle bound—like me," he said.

"You poor, queer, darling husband——"

"No—not poor—not queer," he whispered, holding her tighter. "Just damned slow! But I'm loving you very hard, these days, and I'm going to put this through!"

Then he went out and mailed the letter; and in a few days there came from the White House this reply:

"My Dear Mr. Wells:—I was given my first gun

the summer when I was thirteen. It was a breech-loading, pin-fire, double barrel, made in France. For weeks I was by all odds the worst shot among my friends. Then I found that the trouble was in my eyes. My parents bought me spectacles, and from then on I quickly improved—but those new specs opened up such a world, that I had barely seen before, of interest and beauty in the life of the woods and fields—that I often forgot to shoot at all. It has been that way with me ever since, in spite of what some people say. I am greatly interested in your book. Not enough real stuff has been written for boys. We are just at the beginning of real education. I take off my hat to teachers. You have the greatest job in the land. At best, I can only lead men. You can mould them!"

Reading the letter many times, at first with Kate and then alone, Peter felt a tonic force pour into him; and, for several weeks, writing hard and fast, he could feel the stuff grow strong and real. Then slowly he got snarled once more; and Kate, still watching, said one night:

"Why don't you write to him again?"

"What right have I to impose on him? Think how packed his time must be."

"I don't care. This book is important. And if you can catch his interest he won't mind it in the least. That's exactly the sort of man he is!"

Carefully they composed a letter describing the book as a combination of "the strenuous life" idea and the one that had meant so much in their lives, "We are beggars sitting on bags of gold." And they added a brief mention of that night meeting in the barn. When Peter went out to mail it, she quickly wrote another herself:

"Dear Mr. President:—My husband has just written you a letter about his book about you. If you can only give him ten minutes, face to face, it may change his entire life."

Three weeks later, an answer came:

"Dear Mr. Wells:—That's a bully idea you have for your book. I remember quite well that night in the barn. Why don't you come and see me? Come Tuesday at 10:45."

"Good God!" cried Peter. "That's tomorrow!"

"Never mind," said Kate in a low, tense voice. "I'll pack your bag—while you go through your manuscript and choose what to take along."

"Take along? Do you think I'd show him any of this stuff?" he cried.

"Of course you will! He'll ask for it! And he's President of the United States!"

6.

The next morning in the White House, with a confused, exciting sense of a crowd of other visitors

about him from all over the land, Peter fiercely went over the list of questions he meant to ask, points for his book that he wanted so, that would make such a difference! He asked an official how long he would have. The man glanced at his schedule. "Ten minutes," he said. Peter felt his huge throat constrict. Then came the thought, "He'll make it an hour! He's just that kind! He'll keep all these millionaires and senators and diplomats——" Peter was vague about such men—"all waiting, while we talk of my book!" And he excitedly mopped his brow.

In a slow, rigid way, a few minutes later, he got up when his name was called, and smiling walked into the other room.

The enormous chest of the man! And the jaws, the genial, teathy smile, and the eyes, and the strong grip of his hand!

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Wells! So you were the fellow in the barn. I remember that night—remember it well! We made a quick job of that harnessing, eh?" And then, when Peter had sat down: "So you're writing a book about me for boys? That's a great idea you've got—to hold it all together. Beggars sitting on bags of gold. We all are. I am myself—a beggar—only a beggar, by George!—when I think of all I want to be, and do in life, before I'm through. Now tell me your troubles."

Peter began, and grew tense and hot in his effort to get out what was in him. "What I want to do, Mr. President, is something real!" he ended. From his listener came a glance that asked, "But what do you know of realities?"

"Have you ever been in Dakota, Wells?"

"No, sir."

"Go there if you can. Seen anything of the New York Police?"

"Not much. I——"

"Talk with my friend, Jake Riis. Were you in the War?"

"Why no, Mr. President. You see, my wife's baby was——"

"I understand. Ever been in Albany?"

The questions, fired thick and fast, had filled Peter with dismay. He began talking hard and fast about how in a book of this kind, for boys, there was room for only the A, B, C's of American politics.

"That's right," said Roosevelt cordially, "boil it down, make it simple and plain. But don't you forget that American boys understand a lot more than we older ones think! And don't forget to see Jake Riis! By the way, got a sample of what you've done?"

"Yes," said Peter, turning cold. "But it's not at all as I want it yet."

"Never mind—let's have a look at it."

As he glanced through a few pages then, Peter saw him hesitate; and Peter grew so rigid now that when the President looked up a flash of sympathy came in his eyes.

"All right—bully—this is a start. You haven't got it yet—as you say. But keep at it, Wells—and write me." He rose. "And take my advice. If you want a short cut, why not get a trained writer to help you? See what I mean? It will save your time. . . . Oh, hello Senator, glad to see you. Good-bye, Wells, and good luck to the book. And write me—write me!"

7.

Peter went out in a kind of a daze; but later, on his journey home, the facts of his brief interview grew clear to him, and they were grim. "I got ten minutes and no more. He sized me up as a great, big dub—no first hand knowledge of his life, no power as a writer." For some time he sat staring out of the car window. "And yet he's wrong, by God, he's wrong! I have got it in me! . . . But the difference between us is that he can get it out—I can't. I'm like him—I'm like Roosevelt. So is that farmer out there, cutting wood—and so are millions of average men. The seeds of all he has are in us—but they're all locked up inside."

When he got home that evening, he tried to hide his discouragement; but by her anxious questions Kate soon broke through his defence and got the whole truth out of him.

"All right," she said, determinedly, "there's nothing to be discouraged about. He wants you to get it more at first hand. Why can't you?"

"Go out West? Ride broncos? Shoot and yell and swing a lasso?" At the startled look on his face, Kate threw back her head and laughed. "Now," said he, "when you can stop laughing, tell me something else I'm to do!"

"I will. Why Peter, right here in New York there must be scores of friends of his. He told you to see Jacob Riis."

"I tell you he's wrong! I don't need his friends! I've already got too much as it is! All I need is to write it, get it out!"

"Then why not do as he suggests and get someone to help you, dear—a man who has been trained to write and who does it easily? Other men have begun that way! You'll learn so much that will help you in any other books you try!"

"If I ever try another book," growled Peter, "it will be a telephone directory!"

It ended in his promising to try to find a collaborator. But it was not easy. Peter had no writer friends. As a last resource, he went back to the

Astor Library and spoke to the lean official there. This man, by his dark, discouraging eyes, had built up a wall of defence from the hundreds of readers who came each day; but behind this wall, in his own grim way, he had spent a lifetime watching them—picking out the queer birds in the flock, noticing the books they read or the books that they were writing here. So Peter, coming every day, had attracted his attention. They had had brief talks at times, and he knew a good deal about Peter's book. When asked if he knew of anyone who would do as a collaborator, he answered with a queer expression,

"I do—the very man you want. But he left here some days ago. He was doing a book on the Colonel, too."

"Roosevelt?"

"Yes."

"For boys?"

"That's it."

Peter stared.

"Do you know if he was at it long?"

"Not very. Only a month or so."

"I see."

At the expression on Peter's face, a look almost of compassion came into the lean man's eyes.

"But I don't mind telling you," he said, in a low, confidential tone, "that from what I saw of it, this chap was doing a cheap piece of work. You go

ahead and forget him—and leave all hack-writers alone. You've gone after something big; and you don't want to let it worry you if it takes years to put it through. Most of these people aren't in your class. If you ever get to feeling down, just take a look around the room. Over half of 'em read nothing but trash, and the few queer birds who are on the job are all dried up in theories, or riding hobbies of their own, or out to get one special thing and get it quick. Grabbers, dreamers, loafers, bums, come in here to get out of the cold."

Back to his corner Peter went and plunged again into his work. But, in the weeks that followed, his whole feeling of the lofty room gradually underwent a change. No longer a place of boundless chances, vistas opening bright and wide into a gleaming inner world where all things were possible. He felt the limitations here, not only in himself alone but in all these other workers here, in these faces, this fixed eyes. Even while he was working hard, they pressed into his consciousness.

One day, a florid youngster, with a little pointed beard, sat down and was soon in a fever of writing, throwing off page after page. When anyone sat down next to him, he would look up with a scowl of suspicion; but learning in time of Peter's work, he grew confidential, and one night he told of the play he was writing. Its title was "The Acid Cross,"

and the great scene was in a church. "No ancient beauty—none at all—just modern, ugly, real," he cried, with a strong twang of the Middle West. The hero, who was a chemist—"a modern scientist—understand?"—was trying to keep the girl he loved from becoming a nun. And to show up "the clap-trap of the whole religious bunkum game," he put into the Holy Fount a few drops of an acid so strong that all the worshippers soon began to feel fiery crosses on their brows. There followed a panic in the church. "Then a speech from the scientist, ending with 'Fake!' And then a slow curtain—understand? Do you get it—the big punch of it, the superb dramatic effect? I tell you, man, I know the stage—I've been an actor all my life! And if this is done as it should be, this play will go thundering over the world—till it comes like a crash of doom—to Rome!"

As Peter listened to this youth, a quizzical expression came on his heavy, sensitive face. "My God, am I like that," he asked, "with this would-be famous book of mine?"

In the first, warm, restless days of spring, many travellers came to the library. With books and maps how eagerly they careered about the earth! To Peter's table one young girl brought time tables and sailing lists, and made notes in a hungry way that reminded him of Kate and himself in the first

year of their married life. "I wonder if she'll go?" he thought. "I wonder if any of 'em will go? Or are they all just like me—taking it all out in dreams?"

There was still one more figure who caught his attention here—an elderly, clear eyed little man, who in a wistful, whimsical way perused a most astonishing variety of volumes—on natural science, history, art, philosophy and religion. One Saturday, he brought to the table some huge volumes filled with prints of Spanish and Italian paintings. He apologized to Peter for taking so much room that day.

"Would you mind telling me," Peter asked, "why you are so interested in so many kinds of books?" And, with that whimsical, wistful look, the elderly man answered:

"I am trying to find God. I lost track of Him several years ago, at the time of the death of my dearest friend. It's a puzzling task to find Him, these days. He seems to be so scattered about—in so many kinds of places. What is it *you* are looking for?" Peter smiled back at him and said,

"I'm trying to find Roosevelt." The little man gave a quiet chuckle.

"That should not be hard," he said.

"It isn't. The only trouble comes when you try to crowd him into a book—catch him, hold him, pin him down."

"Yes, that would be difficult."

As Peter told of his troubles, the other listened with a look of deepening curiosity. He spent the rest of the afternoon reading Peter's manuscript; and, when he was through, he said:

"I know very little about books, but reading yours, after what you have told me, I should say that if I were you I'd feel very proud of what I had in me, whether or not I could bring it all out. Thank you for an afternoon that has carried me quite a long way on my road. For the bags of gold you speak of are in us all." He hesitated, and then said, in a low, deferential tone, "I'm inclined to think this gold is God."

After their talk that afternoon, Peter grew more and more intense. Nearly two-thirds of the money was gone. At home he could feel how Kate was cutting down expenses in every little way she could; and again she was earning money by doing work for Dillingham. But she barely ever looked tired now. Gathering all her forces for the impending crisis, she kept steadily on each day, leaving Peter alone when she felt that the thought of her sharpened his anxiety; but again when she knew he wanted her, listening while he talked of his book, putting in quick suggestions, and making him feel her warm, deep faith. He had not let her read it yet. Despite her reluctance to leave him, he made her take Susanna

again to the seashore in July; and alone in the city, he settled down to the last stretch. Often at home he wrote half the night; and by day, in the hot library, Peter utterly forgot those figures who had emerged before. The big room had grown stale to him, its secrets silent, hidden deep. Still, with a slow, grinding force, he kept on with his writing. At times it all seemed like a dream. "When shall I wake up?" he asked.

But just before his awakening, there was thrown across the path of his dream the shadow of a tragedy that affected to no small degree the color of his thinking, the denouement of his own struggle here.

Early in the summer the author of "The Acid Cross" had finished up his manuscript. Peter had watched him, late one evening, wrap it up and address the package. Then both hands had gone to his eyes, and he had sat a moment rigid, as though breathing a last prayer. "He's doing that because he knows I'm looking," Peter had thought. "He just can't help it—playing the part." He had come almost daily after that; and, as he sat reading plays, mumbling anxiously at times or throwing sharp, tormented looks out into space, again Peter had felt he was playing the part. But now he looked thin, sallow, ill; Peter's sympathy was gripped, and he found himself wanting the boy to win. At last, one August afternoon, with the rejected manuscript un-

der his arm, the little actor-dramatist made a slow entrance, as though on the stage, slowly sank into a chair, and the blue eyes that Peter saw were those of a dismal, hopeless boy, sick, lonely, wishing he were dead. But abruptly once more the actor in him came to the fore; again the eyes grew conscious, gleaming; and in a stage whisper,

"Yes, that's it—to die!" he said. "In the very heart and center—of the world that I have loved!"

A moment longer he held his pose. Then with a start he seemed to notice Peter close beside him. He sprang up, laughing, seized Peter's hand, and with a gay, quick, "Good-bye!" he walked off down the lofty room. Peter turned and watched him go. He had caught the whiskey on his breath. "That boy will never kill himself—he'll go on a good drunk instead, and then get a job as cheap as himself, in some road company," he thought. But the next afternoon, to get a book that he needed, he went to his friend, the librarian; and that laconic person asked,

"Remember the little actor ass who used to work at your table?"

"Yes. What about him?"

"Look at this." And he handed Peter an evening paper. On the front page was a half column story under the heading, "His Big Last Act."

"Last night about eight forty-five, when the cur-

tains in the theatres had been rung up and the Great White Way was settling down to wait for the late evening rush, a thin young man with a Vandyke beard and a big portfolio under his arm came up to a taxi by the curb. 'My friend,' he said to the taximan, 'I'm dead to the world. I want a nap.' The breaker of speed ordinances replied, 'All right, old top. Go on home and sleep it off.' 'I have chosen your taxi,' the youth replied, 'as the place for my long sleep.' To this the wheel-smasher answered, 'Have, eh? Choose again!' The bearded boy produced six dollar bills. 'How long can I sit in there for this?' The chauffeur woke right up and asked, 'Where do you want to go, sir?' The youngster scowled impatiently. 'I don't want to go—I want to stay right here where I am!' he cried. 'All right, hop in. When would you like to be called, my Lord?' 'Oh in an hour or so, my good man.' He disappeared into the car, and, while the driver was scratching his head over this queer bird come to roost, his head came out of the window. 'I forgot your tip, my good fellow.' He handed out forty cents and yawned—pulled down the curtains. An hour passed. At ten o'clock the driver looked in and saw that his fare was fast asleep. At eleven, when the street came to life, when the crowds poured out of the theatres and all the cabs and taxis began to hustle for business, the driver again jerked open

the door and shouted, 'Heigh! Time's up! You're home!' There was no reply. He seized the arm of the sleeper to shake him. Then with a quick startled cry he hustled off to get a cop. For the young man with the Vandyke beard was home indeed. In one hand was a bottle of laudanum. On the seat was the big portfolio—which being opened revealed a play in four acts entitled, 'The Acid Cross.' The ambulance doctor said, 'Too late.' In the dead boy's other hand was a card on which, underlined in red ink, was written, 'Exit J. Pinkerton Jones.' "

From reading the story, Peter looked up and met the lean librarian's eyes. There was a curious glint in them:

"And he did it with laudanum," he said. "Good old tragic laudanum."

"Well," said Peter, huskily, "thank God the poor kid got on the front page."

8.

It was hard to work that evening. In spite of himself he kept glancing at the empty chair nearby. What a futile little life; what a cheap, theatrical end. "But we're all more or less that," he thought, "when you think of these little lives we lead—beneath the stars—and the things we try to be." A picture came of the stars at night, up in the moun-

tains where he was born, and then of his wife and child who were still at the seashore. He saw Kate quietly reading, Susanna playing in the sand; he saw the long, shining, ocean waves roll in and break upon the beach. And suddenly that night he found that all the fever of suspense had gone out of his struggle here. The pitiful, cheap, little drama, that had been played so close to him, had abruptly restored his sense of proportions, lost in the strain of this last year. Success? A useful book for boys. And failure? Well, then, back to school.

"Whatever comes, there'll be no scene—no plunging into melodramatic depths of despair—no hell for my wife. No—I'll keep it quiet."

And though, in the month that followed, the old intensity returned, and there were many sleepless nights, when at last the end did come, he kept it quiet, all inside. Early one afternoon in October he left his manuscript with Kate and went out for a long walk. He stayed out until late in the evening. When he came home he found her still reading, and one look at her face was enough. She was disappointed. Well? What next? He sat down and lit his pipe, opened a book and began to read mechanically. Little by little he fixed his thoughts on his old job and Dillingham. What a splendid chief he was, and what a relief to be back with him. He puffed his pipe and glanced at Kate. . He could see

that she was nearing the end. How to make it easy for her? She finished, and there was a little pause, as she put the last pages with the rest. Then Peter spoke up quietly.

"The book's not what I hoped," he said. "I've thought it out pretty clearly, Kate; and, if you'll just agree with me, I feel pretty sure what I'd better do."

She looked up, her eyes bright with the wave of relief that his quiet words had given her.

"Do you know what I've been thinking?" In her voice, now low and clear, was the Scotch burr of years ago. And he noticed it and thought, "That's because of the strain! She's been sitting here all afternoon, wondering what she'd say to me!"

"I've been thinking," she went on, "of the little old man you told me about, in the library, who was hunting for God. When he read the book, he said, 'If I were you I'd be very proud of what I had in me—even if I couldn't bring it all out.'" As he smiled at that and started to speak, she went on quickly: "This book may succeed, for all I know. I'm afraid my opinion isn't worth much. I only know one simple thing—that it held me, Peter, oh so hard! You've packed so much into it, dear, so much more than you'll ever know! But it does seem to me to need more work. Why don't you take it to Dillingham?"

"All right, I'll do that, if you like—though I think I know what he'll advise. But remember, Kate." For a moment his eyes held hers. "I'm not beaten by this. I've come a long way. It has taught me a good many things. But now that it's over, there's to be no fuss at all—of any kind. We've some of the money left, thank God, and we'll be better off than ever before."

And she came and kissed him, and they laughed, and remembered they had had nothing to eat, and so they got supper together. And with the long strain of suspense at an end, their love for each other rose in a way that would have made an outsider believe they were celebrating some success, instead of a failure, in their lives.

And that ended it. For Dillingham, after he had read the book, told Peter, "I don't say you can't get a publisher. Go and try it if you like. But my advice is to lay it aside. There's a big book here, and you'll write it some day."

"No—I won't write it," Peter said. "But at any rate I'm glad I tried. Can you give me back my job in school?" His old chief gripped his hand and said,

"Yes, I need you."

"Good. When can I start?"

"Next week, if you like. But don't you want a little rest?"

"No, I don't seem to feel like it now."

And the next Monday morning at nine o'clock, spreading open on his desk a history of the United States, hesitating for a time, Peter looked out at his class and said,

"Before we begin with Chapter Eighteen, I advise you fellows—if you want to enjoy yourselves and learn some things that'll do you good—to read a book by Roosevelt, called 'The Winning of the West.' "

CHAPTER IV.

I.

HE had thought that to get back into the old, familiar work would be a relief, but it was not so. The long, hot summer had left his nerves in a state that played queer tricks on him. In school, toward the end of each noisy day, his whole body ached; over his eyes was a throbbing pain; and it was all that he could do to keep from flying into a rage, grabbing each small offender and banging him up against the wall. In the time he had been away from all this, he had forgotten what it was like. The demands upon him, and the din of the hard, shrill voices, never stopped. And this was to go on and on. "I had my chance to get out of this rut, and missed it!" Now he realized how close he had been to success. He felt the strong points in his book, realized what a boundless wealth of life he had poured into it. All for nothing! He thought of mistakes that he had made, and came out of his memories face to face with failure. "Yes, old boy, you're through! From this time on it's middle age,

and the rut and the daily grind for you!" All life at such times seemed level, flat, a bleak cold marsh of little things.

Still, with the tenacious force that had always been a part of him, he kept grimly to the job. "No squealing now, no showing this—not a sign!" he would command himself. And when he went home to supper, head aching and no appetite, facing another sleepless night, with Kate and Susanna he never let the pent-up irritations of the day burst out of him. When at times Kate could not keep from showing her anxiety in questions, he would answer, "Why no, Kate—I feel all right," or "No—today's been pretty easy." And he would read until late at night. His pipe was a great companion.

But suddenly there came a night when he needed every ounce of his new strength and steadiness.

The old brown house in which they lived fronted upon Stuyvesant Square, but its side windows looked on Second Avenue; and down this broad thoroughfare early one evening came abruptly a babel of sounds—the blare and boom of a brass band, the raucous honks of motor horns and roars of cheers and rushing feet. Peter threw open a window, leaned out and saw a big car surrounded by crowds and waving flags. The next moment, growing rigid, he knew that it was Roosevelt, swinging down through the lower East Side, down into the tenements, into

the commond herds of men! And, as the roar of cheering rose till it made the very window panes beside him shake and rattle, a hot wave of resentment surged up in Peter. He clenched his hands; and, watching the burly figure below stand up in the car and wave his hat, deep within himself Peter cried,

"What right have you—what right have you to come stirring us all up like this?"

But he did not speak. With his big fists clenched and every muscle taut, he stood there till the din was gone. For he knew that Kate was just behind him. At last he heard her move softly away. He turned and caught a glimpse of her face, white and strained. Peter shut the window. The receding roar of sound was cut off, and in the sudden quiet the room inside felt small and cramped. Just Kate and himself. He drew a slow, determined breath. "No cheap acting, ranting, now. Hold on to yourself; be a man." And, in the next few moments, it was as though that grip on himself were slowly, slowly squeezing up something hard and strong and bright, like bur-nished, gleaming metal. He felt it rise. At last he said:

"When you think of all that fellow can be before he gets through, it gives you a new hold on life. Oh Kate, I'm so glad I tried that book. It brought me up so close to him."

Then he heard a kind of a sob. She swung about and came to him quickly.

"Oh Peter! If you only knew how I love you for that!" she whispered. He held her tight.

"No, Kate, no. Just slow—slow." His voice was low and incoherent. He felt her trembling like himself, and he waited. Then, in a steady tone: "But it's going to be so much easier now. I see it all so clearly—just what it is I want to do. Remember that first promotion in school? There'll be others—more and more. Just slowly, slowly—more and more."

And time proved that he was right. Life did grow easier after this; for by keeping up the outward show of steadiness and cheerfulness, he began to feel like that inside. The keen, autumn days had come. He began to sleep at night, and the pain above his eyes was no longer a constant torment. In the school, as he grew used to it, the work no longer irked him so; and he relished the quiet evenings at home.

So the stolid Peter of every day—having buried for good and all the rebellious Peter inside, who had made so much trouble all these years with his dreams and his adventurings—began once more to settle down.

2.

And the new, restless spark of life, which he

presently felt in his home did not alarm him in the least.

It dawned upon him one evening that Susanna was fast growing up, and that he barely knew her now. At the start, it had not been so. He looked wistfully back to the time when she was an adorable little thing, when her voice had been soft, with the tenderest notes, and her laugh had gone deep into him. He had read Mother Goose to her. They had laid out a farm with blocks on the floor. Peter's big chair had become a mountain. The old wolf's lair had been up there; and lambs had been carried off from the farm and rescued in the nick of time by a good old dog who, in spite of the fact that he had but one leg, could invariably be counted on to produce the happy ending. . . . But, in kindergarten and later in school, she had grown shrill, like all the rest whom he had to face in his classroom; and, in the worry of those years when it had been hard to make ends meet, she had become an irritation, chattering, demanding, asking countless questions. More and more he had put her off—or rather, Kate had kept her away. . . . But now that Peter had come again to one of the quiet times in his life, he woke up to the fact that she was a stranger. And, when he tried to make friends with her, he came up against a veritable wall of reserves and false conceptions.

which this queer little daughter of his seemed to have raised against him.

"It's my own fault," he decided. "I've been wrapped up in the grand importance of my own dull little life. Here's a life a thousand times as fresh and sweet and new as mine, that has sprung up right under my nose. I'm missing it. She's nine years old, and she has learned to look at me, not as her Dad, but as one of those dry cantankerous killers of joy known to her as 'teachers.' When I come home, it's a sign for Susanna to settle right down. And Susanna hates to settle down! She loathes the job of being good and not making a noise to bother her father. Bother me—why shouldn't she? What else am I here for, I'd like to know!" He worked himself into a state of virtuous indignation against a hard, selfish father by the name of Peter Wells. "Now," he concluded, "I propose to show her what a teacher can be!"

He took her to the circus; and there, warming up to his new role, he treated the amazed little girl to an ice cream cone, and peanuts and candy on top of that. Susanna was sick in bed for two days, but Peter was not at all abashed. When he heard her ask, in a perplexed and awe-struck tone, "Mother, what in the world has happened to Dad?" Peter thrilled with a new delight. "I'll show her what has

happened!" And, not to be discouraged by many failures, slight rebuffs and looks of blank surprise, he helped her with her lessons at night, discovered her troubles and showed her short cuts; and, with nothing but a dull geography book as a starting point, he took her on travels to the Far East. Mute and very still at first, as they journeyed on he felt Susanna's small hand on his arm; in a low, thrilling voice certain questions were asked. He found that his daughter liked to know just how they travelled on sea or land; on ship, on train, on river boat, in rickshaw or on camel's back; she wanted to know just what to wear, and about the meals and the beds at night. So he grew careful and exact; and, with these matters settled, they looked together at the East. Once, in a sharp, excited voice, she asked,

"Have you taken many trips like this?"

"Oh yes—all my life, my dear."

And that night, as they played *parchesi*, he told her how it had been played in India long, long ago—with a spacious court in place of the board, and in place of counters beautiful slave girls moving about as the game went on.

"What did they wear?" she demanded. And, as her huge father tried to describe to her those garments, into his small daughter's eyes came a look amused and pitying.

This was not all steadily done. The winning of

Susanna proceeded most unevenly; now it was rapid, now very slow. There were evenings when he was made to feel that she did not want him at all, and at such times he was nothing loath to go back to his evening paper. But, long before the winter was over, the affair had come to a stage where Susanna in a talkative mood would chatter away to her father as though she had known him all her life, about her school, her best girl friends and a club that they had organized. She even confided to him one night her guilty feeling over the way she could not yet make up her mind to put dolls aside. "I know it's silly at my age!" she exclaimed, as she sat beside him sewing, her blue-ribboned pigtails bobbing, her blue eyes intent on her work. As she talked on about her dolls and how hard it was to leave them behind, from the fresh and radiant depths within her this mothering passion came up with a force that made her silent father feel, with a mingling of pleasure and pain, how immense were the life forces playing with this little girl.

At times she would bring home a friend from the big public school nearby. One night, with a small Jewish girl, as they sewed in the other room, Peter heard Susanna exclaim in a shocked tone,

"Why Sarah Blumberg!"

"I tell you," came the voice of her friend, "there isn't any God at all."

Peter looked up with a start and saw them through the open door. The small Jewess, stout and studious, with spectacles over solemn black eyes, held doggedly to her assertion, and for some time they fought it out. Susanna had not many weapons, but she was game for an argument.

"How do you know there is no God? How do you positively know?" she demanded, in a withering tone.

"My big brother told me so! So there!"

"Oh." There was silence. "But how does *he* know?"

"Out of books—the very best ones. My brother has read thousands. He reads all night. He never sleeps."

"Never sleeps! I'll bet he does! You've got to sleep!"

"How do you know? Have you ever tried it?"

"I don't care—I'll bet there's a God. If there isn't, how were we all born? Where did we come from? What was the world before the world?"

"Science!" came the quick reply to this volley of questions. "Science can show you all about that. To Science it is clear as day."

"Have you *read* Science, may I ask?"

"No, I haven't—and you neither! But my brother has read every word of it! 'Don't you let 'em fool you,' he says to me. 'Our father and mother are

old Jews who can't even read English. Don't let 'em fool you! Science says there is no God. Science says there is nothing at all unless you can prove it already—exact!" Do you know what Science can do with the stars? You see a star, way up in the sky. Is it a million miles from the earth, or a million miles and three feet and two inches? Science can tell you!"

Here Susanna's voice cut in, sharp and clear, triumphant:

"Sarah Blumberg, that is simply too ridiculous for any words! Where could they start measuring from—where do you think the earth begins? Down there on Second Avenue, or in this room, or up on the roof? Three feet and two inches! If that's Science, Sarah Blumberg, you can keep it to yourself. There's a lot of things I don't yet understand and I'm glad I don't. If there is a God—and I'll bet there is—he's so perfectly enormous you couldn't possibly measure him out! *Three—feet—and—two—inches!*" Again the devastating scorn. "Did you ever notice that big god out there in the sitting room?"

"What?" gasped the startled scientist. "What do you mean?"

"I mean exactly what I say. That big yellow Chinese god. It's my mother's. She's been in China, you know." Susanna's voice had now a calm su-

periority. "She says the world is *full* of gods—and religions—and they're wonderful!"

"Are your parents orthodox?" came the loud shocked whisper.

"What do you mean?"

"Orthodox! You mean you don't know what orthodox is?" The scientist was now gaining ground, but Susanna cut her off.

"Orthodox? Of course I know! And they're not—they wouldn't consider it! Science neither! They don't brag about sitting up all night and reading when they should be asleep. But they know more about gods—of all kinds—in their little fingers—than your big brother in all his books! Now, Sarah Blumberg, my advice to you is to leave God alone and attend to your children. Their clothes and shoes are too shocking for words!"

"I can't help it—I'm poor!"

"You are not poor! You spent eight cents this very day—on candy! And the way you get everything sticky you touch is perfectly disgusting! You positively stick to your children!"

At this moment Kate came through and shut the door behind her. Peter leaned back with a curious smile. So self-important and comic at times was this little daughter of his—so small, so tremendous, so very dear.

3.

As the winter drifted on, though there still came to Peter ugly moments of regret at the thought of the opportunity lost, he grew steadily more reconciled. At school he began to do extra work for Dillingham, and by degrees he came more and more to feel the rugged strength of the man and of his philosophy.

One Saturday night the old principal asked Peter and Kate to come to supper in his home. It was a small apartment in a dilapidated house a little south of Washington Square. He had lived there half his life. "I'm a curio in this town," he said, "I haven't budged for thirty years. Same home, same school. And I'm hopeless now. Grown too fond of 'em both to change." In his old fashioned living room, the furniture, rugs and pictures were all mellow with the years; but on the walls and all about were fresh accumulations out of the ever growing activities in his big school. The room had an air both old and young. As he usually did on Saturday night, he had let his servant go, and he cooked the supper himself. Later, when they had settled down to smoke before the small coal fire, he gave them bits about his life. And, though most of the time he seemed talking to Kate, every word was aimed at her husband.

"I made up my youngster mind," he said, "to be a college president. How gloriously solemn I was when I got my first big chance—a college about the size of a peanut—perched on the bank of the Ohio. It was down in Kentucky, near the place where I was born." He told how he had slaved for years to build up the forlorn little center of learning, and how in the end a certain old Kentucky feud had come in to spoil it all. "So I was ousted; and on the whole I was glad of it," he went on. "Ever since I left Columbia, I had felt a hankering for the city of New York. So back I came. I was thirty-one—and now I'm over sixty. And I'm not a college president, but I've *made* one, out of a boy in our school. And I guess I've made a judge or two, and three or four State Senators, God help me, and some millionaires in the wholesale clothing business—and some first-class burglars, too, and murderers, and a pretty young thing who has the whole town at her feet—she's dancing up at Weber and Field's. 'I've made 'em all,' I like to say, with a glow of conscious pride. But how much had I to do with it?

"You're over twenty years younger, Peter—I wonder how you'll feel at my age? You can go on steadily up, if you want, and most likely get my job when I step out—I hope you will. If you do, will you feel the same as I? The world changes so fast, it's hard to tell how a man will feel in twenty

years—but some things go pretty deep, and there's one feeling in us all that's likely to stay about the same." He smiled and frowned a little, wrinkling his brows a bit over the smoke of his cigar. "It's this—this rising feeling—this sense of having such a lot inside of us when we are young. Up it comes; and, as each one of us makes his solemn little attempt to flash his light up to the stars, he gets to feeling like God Almighty. Then, in most cases, down it goes, and he feels like a man again. And after many such ups and downs he gets used to this feeling. It's like an old friend. 'Hello—you here again?' he says. 'Good-morning.' And presently, 'Good-night.' For down it sinks again to sleep. And the sleeps grow longer—longer.

"But I'm not at all sorry about growing old. I like it. I was never in all my days so happy as now. In a queer way I feel younger, too. And the reason is, I suppose, that way down inside of me, where so much goes on that we don't understand, this rising feeling has widened out—till suddenly I've waked up to the fact that it's in all people as well as in me, and that I'm much more interested in watching its countless ups and downs in others than in myself alone. My own little dream of bumping the stars is dead, but in others it lives on. 'The King is dead. Long live the King.' And, as I watch this feeling rise in thousands of young people, I'm always

finding something new. I've got over the idea that I can do much to mould their lives. Instead of that, I watch 'em all—just giving a hand to 'em now and then, or pointing and saying, 'Look over there. There's something you are missing.'

"There's nothing new in all this, of course. We all of us know it, as a fact. But as more than a fact, as a feeling that soaks all through you—it's immense. It's big as all democracy. It makes you wish you had more time to watch and listen and understand. I used to watch you, Peter, learning all those languages, and more than once I wondered why. But I envy you now and curse myself for my own laziness in the past. For I'd like to listen to New York in every one of its many queer tongues—queer to me, but to the man or woman or child that speaks it, intimate and dear."

All through this rambling talk of his chief, Peter could feel a vein of encouragement meant for himself. And the question flashed into his mind: "I wonder if Kate put him up to this?"

They went that night to an old Bowery theatre where an Italian company was giving *Trovatore*. The house was packed; people sat in the aisles; small boys and girls with joyous eyes squeezed their way in and out of the throng; the boxes bulged with families; on every hand were solemn babies nursing at their mothers' breasts. And, as the old opera

lumbered slowly on its way, there were explosive bursts of laughter, hisses, and long silences. Here was felt no worry about getting on in life; here was a place to watch and listen. Peter felt relaxed and warm. And later, on his way home with Kate, he knew that she was happy.

"What a big human specimen Dillingham is," he remarked. At first there was no reply. Then she said,

"You know, Peter, a life like that—it seems to me about as big and fine as anything one could ask for." And, although she did not add, "And that's how you are going to be——" he understood as though she had spoken. He waited a moment, and then he replied,

"And yet he's a poor devil, Kate."

And she knew what he meant, and squeezed his arm.

At home, long after she was asleep, he got up and came into the other room. He lit his pipe and settled back with a sense of solid comfort. What a familiar presence here. No more leaps into the dark; no more strain, uncertainty. The words of his old chief recurred: "Time to watch and listen." He picked up the evening paper. He had not had time to read it tonight. On the front page his attention was caught by the headline: "One More Senator Joins the Ananias Club." With a gleam of relish

Peter's eye travelled down the column. "What a game proposition Teddy is, when it comes to a fight," he was thinking. "He made a bad slip in that Tuesday speech and got himself into a hole. But now watch him get out of it!" And he read, "In making that statement Senator Brown told a wilful and deliberate and unmitigated untruth." Peter chuckled. "Go it, Teddy boy—you may be a little wrong now and then, but by Golly you're pretty right through it all!" Hungrily he read the rest. "I'll bet he gets away with it."

Peter tossed the paper aside, knocked the ashes from his pipe, put out the light and went to bed.

4.

One afternoon soon after this, having had a crowded day in school, Peter spent an hour uptown looking into several shops for a small gift for Susanna. Her birthday was now close ahead. At last he found what he wanted, and with a feeling of great satisfaction and relief he started home. But, on coming into the flat, he learned that Susanna had a bad cold. She was in bed, flushed and hoarse. And the old, familiar, sinking feeling came to Peter out of the past. Suddenly she opened her eyes and gave him a look of impatient reproach for being so late. She wanted to get away from this bed

and take "a long cool trip" with him. So Peter sat down, and her hand clutched his, and soon they were journeying far away over cool seas and beneath quiet stars—away from this hot fever, this loud, hoarse breathing that scared him so. In an hour Susanna was asleep.

But the next night when he came home he found it was pneumonia; and, as Peter sat by the bed, with a dull, benumbing ache of fear he realized what she meant to him. "Time to watch and listen." Rigid, he watched her heaving chest and listened to the quick, rough breaths. And, as the night wore slowly on and at times there came a spasm that seemed to tear and rend her, he huddled forward, mountainous, every muscle straining, as though to lift the pain away. On the other side of the bed, he saw Kate doing various things, tense and deft. In a whisper he asked,

"Are you sure of that doctor? How about calling in somebody else?" She shook her head. "Or getting a nurse?"

"No, I can handle this," she said.

The windows were open now; it was cold. Toward morning Peter fell asleep—and wakened with a violent start. Dawn was creeping into the room; and Kate with the doctor was at the door. Peter stared at them, mute and numb. The loud hoarse breathing beside him had stopped. Why?

He did not dare to look at the bed. Then Kate turned back, and in the soft glow of the lamp he caught the glad relief in her eyes. She came to him, and as she came she seemed to bring with her a rush of new life.

"The crisis is past. She's better now."

Evening after evening he watched Susanna get back her strength. And they took long journeys as before, and he brought her small surprises. He utterly spoiled this little girl. And, when she had gone asleep, he had long talks about her with Kate. He could see how the strain had told on Kate, in spite of her impatient denials. Her face was grey, and there were shadows under her resolute brown eyes. "We won't take any more risks," he said. "You're going South with Susanna." They drew very close in the next few nights, making plans with a love grown quiet and deep in the relief of the danger passed. A week later, Kate and Susanna started off for Florida. They were gone six weeks. Then at last they were back, browned by the sun and full of new vitality. And, though the money they had saved was gone again, the spring had come; and, without trying to think it out, he knew that he was entering upon a new stage in his life.

5.

Slowly a change was coming in his whole feeling toward the school. The old sardonic hardness in his attitude was mellowing. Susanna and her illness had made such a difference. Now, when a boy in his class fell sick, Peter went to his tenement and there did what he could to help. He would often stay till late at night. There were many demands of this kind; and, growl as he would, he could not resist them. He took more and more evening work, clubs and classes in the school. Deeper and deeper he was drawn in. Not at once, but slowly through the years, his own personal straining to rise was little by little merged and made a part of this vaster rising, this prodigious battle for the children of New York. "He that loseth his life shall find it." Peter Wells was finding it now. Through all the din and jangle and rasping irritations he moved, a big sluggish man of middle age, making no show of what lay beneath; but as time went on he could feel the tenacious strength of his personality grow and make its impress upon the life about him.

Once more he won promotion. He was an assistant principal now, and his activities increased. At the head of all the schools in that section of the town was a deputy superintendent—"Old Granite,"

he was often called; a man barely fifty but old in spirit, rigid against every change. Against him, with a grim enjoyment, John Dillingham had fought for years. Into the plots and conspiracies Peter entered with deepening zest; and soon he was planning campaigns of his own—to change this school, to make of it a rich, free, vital center of life, to demand and obtain a “square deal” for these children, to fight for their health, to go into their homes and see that they were fed and clothed, to bring their parents into the school to help in the fight for better things, to change the teaching and make it grip the keen fresh minds and imaginations of these little citizens. Education, warm, vital, throbbing, alive! In this absorbing battle, Peter was drawn steadily deeper into the crowded tenement life, its challenge and its problems, its hungry aspirations.

A Russian Jewish boy of sixteen, dark, slim and precocious, took Peter one night to see a play, in a little theatre up over a tobacco shop. The play had been staged by friends of his, and it was called “The Candle.” The curtain rose on darkness. Then was heard a baby’s cry, and at the same moment a tiny flame of light appeared. It came from a tall candle there. As in scene after scene the life of a man from birth to death was roughly sketched, the candle kept burning lower, lower. And the

effect was breathless. It was as though from all over the narrow, stifling room, packed with the youth of the tenements, came a whisper, "Go on! Go on! Go on! Can't you see how fast it's burning? And it's your life! It's all you have! Stop waiting, wasting, holding back!" When at last the light went out, that silence in the darkness was held for a moment—and then a breath, long, deep and quivering, was heard.

Old memories stirred in Peter that night, but gone was the sharp pang of regret.

"This is my life. Here I am strong."

6.

In the meantime, through those crowded years, Susanna had grown into her 'teens, and, with the delightful egotism of her age, was demanding more and more of Peter's time and interest. Helping in her lessons and trying to answer honestly the questions she poured out on him; listening to her perplexities and the sudden troubles that loomed enormous to her mind; gravely listening, all intent, with a grunt or a nod and hardly ever the sign of a twinkle in his eyes, as his important and self-engrossed young daughter chattered on; delighting in her triumphs and sympathizing in her woes, planning small surprises and sprees and celebrations—

it seemed to Peter sometimes as though she were the fresh deep source of all the lively interest he threw into his work at school. With Kate he loved to plan and contrive for Susanna's education. They wanted to give her everything—abundant health and hosts of friends, music, college, travel abroad. The vistas stretched into the years, and back to them both came the long buried hunger to journey far and explore this fascinating earth—to do it with Susanna.

So, with the life of his home and his school crowding one into the other, making constant new demands and as constantly pouring in fresh hopes and interests and dreams, this changing, deepening, settling life of Peter Wells wore rapidly on. There was grey in his heavy shock of hair, strong markings 'round his mouth and eyes; for the cares and the anxieties and responsibilities piled up. Year after year the grind went on. At last, one day at close of school, Dillingham swung around in his big swivel chair and said,

"I've some news for you. The principal in School Thirty-eight has died, and you are next in line."

Peter had won his principal's license some time before, and had been on the waiting list. But now for a moment he made no reply. With mingled feelings he looked at his chief.

"You don't want to leave," said Dillingham.

"That's it."

"And I don't want to have you. Sitting here I've been thinking of all that we've been able to do in these last years by working together. It isn't much—we've just made a start. And I'm nearly seventy, Peter—the job's beginning to tell on me. I can't go on much longer. And when I quit I want you here to drive it on, this work of ours. I want it so much that I've made up my mind to send in my resignation now instead of a little later."

"No!" said Peter sharply.

"Yes," said his chief. "If I wait, I'll have to give my place to a stranger. I don't want to. I want you. I've already talked about it uptown. There were difficulties, of course; but, because I've refused promotion and stuck to this school for so many years, I've been able to make 'em stretch a point in our favor. With you here, as I explained, I can still be right behind you." A hungry look came on his face. "I'll be here most of the time, I guess." Peter gripped his hand and said,

"If you aren't, I'll know the reason why!"

When he told the news to Kate, she said, "Oh, Peter, I'm so glad" And as he held her in his arms he felt her trembling. "Didn't I know you had it in you, all the time? It's come at last! And now we haven't the least idea how far we'll go—

all the rest of our lives!" They sat down and began to talk and plan, but their talk was all in fragments. Each of them kept stopping to listen for Susanna. Soon they heard her quick step outside, an impatient turn of her key in the door. In she came, with her bundle of books, and tossed them down. She was well along in high school now—small for her age, slim, wiry, dark, with vivid blue eyes. As she took off her hat she was humming a song. "Oh Mother, I'm terribly late!" she exclaimed. "It's Friday night, you know—dance at school!" Peter watched her, smiling, and said,

"Susanna, I've some news for you."

"What is it?" And when he began to tell her, suddenly getting it all in a flash, she broke in, with a little rush. "Oh you darling, wonderful Dad!" Into his arms Susanna came and hugged him tight. And, as though in this room some secret spring of emotions had been sprung, all three broke into a medley of excited chatter, laughter, sudden interruptions. In less than no time Peter was made School Superintendent of New York. "And by that time," Susanna cried, "there'll be a million pupils! And every one will be under the thumb of a man by the name of Peterkin Wells—who happens to be *my father!*"

Late that night, when he was alone, Peter's mind went back through the years. From the time of

those frosty mountain nights when as a boy he had hurried down to his uncle's store and found the shaggy, gnarled, old man waiting for him with his stamps and his dreams that roamed out over the earth, figure after figure came up in Peter's memory. And the look which came in his grey eyes was compounded of various feelings, whimsical, yet very deep. He had known so many men who had failed, and how often they were finer and more humanly appealing than those few who had won success.

"How much we all have in ourselves, both good and bad, and how it's kept down. I wonder what the world would be like if every mother's son of us became what he might have been?"

For a moment, as though the eyes of his spirit were looking at some vast and mad and flaming panorama, over the heavy sensitive face of Peter Wells there came the look which is bound to come upon the face of any man who looks off and far away into the prodigious wonder of what this human existence upon the earth is to become, in the millions of years that rise ahead. Startled, as though in some weird trance his spirit had been suddenly flung to a clear and radiant height above the grey, familiar clouds. "Mad!" he muttered. "Utterly mad! Every one of hundreds of millions of common little folk like me, all to be some day like that? The very stars would tumble down!" With a smile

and a long quivering breath he dropped back to that present year of Nineteen Hundred and Twelve A.D., when all sensible people knew that no prodigious happening of any kind was any more to shake this steady world of ours. Back he came into his own small life.

"Thank God, so far as I'm concerned, it's settled now for the rest of my days."

CHAPTER V.

I.

IT was early one night the following autumn. Susanna was out—at some school affair; and Peter and Kate had settled down to a long quiet evening, with some work he had brought home in order to get her advice. For him the last few weeks had been filled with the numberless adjustments which came at the start of the new school year, as he found himself at the head of some two thousand children.

Presently the door bell rang, and he went to the door and opened it. In the dim light of the hall loomed the tall figure of a man, a younger man, who looked at Peter intently, with a questioning smile. In a moment Peter felt a stir and glow of memory. In a low voice the stranger said,

“You don’t know me.”

“Yes—I know you.” Moving slowly backward, he let the light from the room behind him strike full on the visitor’s face. “Moon Chao!” he cried,

“Splendid! Yes—it is I!”

A few moments later, in the room, all three of them together were talking excitedly. Dazed at first, Peter caught but a blurred picture of the man—tall and dark, with lustrous eyes—unreal as a vision dropped from the sky. For in a twinkling this room, where they had lived for twenty years, was utterly changed, as it began to fill with the light of memories. As he looked at Kate and felt the almost painful rush of happiness in her low quick thrilling laugh, up from the depths of both their lives flashed the old dream of that first year. Glowing recollections, confused, haphazard, up they came. Motionless, his smiling gaze was fixed upon this messenger from the Country of What Might Have Been, and slowly Moon Chao began to grow real.

Tall, slender—no, not slender, lean. There was something almost gaunt about him, powerful lines in his dark face. "How hard he has lived! How old can he be?" Peter reckoned a moment. "Just twenty-eight. Eighteen years since he left this room. Good God, what years they must have been!" But, in spite of the signs of struggle and early, deep maturity in the long face, with its high forehead, strong cheek bones and powerful jaws, there was youth in the big black gleaming eyes. In almost perfect English, Moon Chao was talking rapidly, and the story he was telling struck into the whirl of Peter's thoughts like a strong, clear path of light.

He had lived at first with his uncle and had gone to that small school which Peter had been asked to teach. In Peter's place they had secured a young Chinaman from America, who had studied under William James.

"What a spirit he had!" Moon Chao exclaimed. "How he loved the work! He half starved himself, and many times he would work on the whole night through, to study and to read and plan how he was going to make his way, deep, deep, deep into our minds, take hold of us and make us think clear truth and throw away the lies. At last he learned to open great windows. 'Look!' And we would see—far off to the Western World—and far down into ourselves."

He turned to Kate.

"For in this man was the same faith which you began to give me here. 'You do not know what you can be!' he would declare. 'No country knows! But they shall see! There shall be at some far day a China dazzling as the land that men have dreamed of for the gods! And the only road to that land,' he would say, 'is the path of truth, reality—not the shallow, surface reality of every day, but the deep knowledge of ourselves and all the wonder forces, the miracles inside of us, that as yet have barely been revealed! You must never lose your faith in that. Be proud of yourselves

and China—proud of her for what she has been, still more for what she is to be. The road to that is long and hard; we ourselves must build it as we go—slowly up the mountainside. And for this building we must have so many tools—tools of the mind and of the soul—tools simple, tools as intricate as great, miraculous machines—and powder of the spirit, too, and dynamite, to blast away great rocks and cliffs of prejudice. But oh my children, now at first we must use only simple tools.'

"So speaking in the morning, he would open the book on his desk, and the work of the day beginning would often go on until the dark. He was a master hard to satisfy. Though he was patient, kind and human, always ready to stop for a laugh or in order to find our point of view, back he would come to the drill of the day, and drill and drill until each task was done in a clean, thorough way. We loved that man—we slaved for him. We were few—we were only seventeen boys; but all but one, and three that died, kept on with him until the time when we entered the University. There we found among the students a scattered few from all over the land, who under the guidance of two or three great teachers in the faculty were studying the sciences. We joined them, and with those Great Tools we began to build the road to the new nation

that shall be. What talks we had, and how we worked! Often we would dream too much, for dreams are soft and easy. Again and again we would forget the command of our first captain, and turning impatiently aside from all reality soar away. But suddenly we would hear him say, 'Come back, come back, my children. Up there are dizzy cliffs that lead only into clouds. Back to the road—back to the tools—back to the work.' And back we would come.

"And we saw the road grow longer, with obstacles on every hand and many paths that led astray. In spite of our proud, clear thinking, we found we could not see ahead in the ocean of our country's life. From its depths and from the world outside vast forces rose, and rolling in they swept us on—to changes? Yes. But oh my friends, so different! Japan and Russia, England, France and Germany and America were always there. Their money rolled in, and their business men, their diplomats, their engineers. In a fury that was blind, the Boxers rose against them—massacred—but were put down; and our condition after that was worse than it had been before. Japan and Russia went to war, and China had to pay the price. So all these forces from outside poured into China's wakening. And so, when at last a year ago we found ourselves a republic,

we soon discovered that our new state was no glorious goal of our dreams, but only one short step ahead!"

Moon Chao broke off with a quick laugh.

"Oh, I have so much to tell you—and so much to learn from you! How can we succeed—you—you—and I? It has been so long! Eighteen years!"

"Eighteen years!" repeated Kate. And then Peter asked him,

"Why did you stop writing, Moon Chao?"

"I stopped because you did not reply!"

"When was that?"

"About five years after I had left you," he said. And suddenly Peter remembered it now. Kate had been very ill at the time, and life had been black. How bitter the letter from Peking had made him then! "I waited for months," Moon Chao went on. "There was no reply. And I told myself, 'They no longer care to write—or they are dead. I will keep what I have, my memory.'"

There was a little silence. Then, with her smiling eyes on his, Kate asked,

"Do you remember how when you were with us here you were going to be a great actor, Moon Chao?"

He threw back his head and laughed.

"Yes, yes—I must tell you about that! For I

did remember—and all the time I was working for that—it became a part of all the rest. China shall be new, I thought, but not by merely imitating what has been done in other lands. China must always be herself, and herself goes back into her past, and her past is in her drama. More and more of my time, as I grew, I began to spend in the theatres. My father's spirit was close to me there. I watched and listened, and drank in old wine that set me all aflame. Soon I began to play small parts. They praised my work and gave me hopes of leading roles as time went on. But then in that first little school my teacher died. He had given his life in twelve hard years. 'Now you must come,' my uncle said, 'or soon the school will die away—for I can find no teacher.' I heard his message many times and struggled hard to throw it aside, to forget all that had been given to me, to escape the debt. But I asked myself, 'How do I know I shall be a great actor? Here is something I can do, here is a great teacher's work that will die unless I carry it on until a better man can be found.' So I went back, five years ago. When I took the little school, there were thirty-seven boys. There are over seventy now—and, though I have never learned to teach like the man who came behind me, I have grown to love the work! So here I am! I have come to learn all

that I can—what is good, what is bad, what is weak, what is strong—in all your schools—and then go back to China!”

As he went on, in reply to their questions, pouring out his hopes and plans, Peter turned with a quick start. Laughing, her face radiant, Kate was speaking in Chinese! It was as though all the years between had abruptly dropped away. Moon Chao leaned forward in delight and took both her hands in his.

“Oh, I am glad, so glad!” he cried. “Do you know that when I came to your door I was frightened? Do you know the cause? I was asking, ‘Shall I find them here? And if I do, how shall they be? These two people gave me life—they caught me up from a childish terror that was worse than any death—they took me in when they were young and their home was like a heaven—and here they gave me splendid dreams! I am the son of the glory of their youth! And now perhaps I shall find them old—the light gone out!’ ”

“Moon Chao, you’ve come too late for that! Our old age is left behind!” said Kate, in a voice vibrating with the strange happiness of this night. Once more, almost unconsciously, she began talking in Chinese; and Peter knew she was telling of the fight he had made in these last years. His mind swept quickly over them. How hard and dull and com-

monplace they seemed to him, mere drudgery! And yet they were like solid rock beneath him now! "Thank God, he didn't come to us in the years when I had failed and failed! Then we were old! It's different now! I've stood the gaff—come through at last! I can welcome him, and this dream he is bringing!" He recalled how again and again, in all those years of failure, this vision of What Might Have Been had come to him, and how each time there had been a stabbing of regret. But now all that was left behind, and now he could be glad with Kate over Moon Chao's coming. "He must live with us while he is here," thought Peter. Again he looked at his wife. "How happy she is—how young she is!"

2.

Suddenly he turned his head and saw Susanna, stiff with surprise, standing in the doorway. She had come so quietly that nobody had noticed her; and, as Moon Chao and her mother talked on rapidly in Chinese, Susanna listened aghast. With keen relish and delight, Peter watched her. Straight as an arrow, vigorous, slim, her head thrown back, her dark face flushed from a quick walk home. "Head utterly filled with her own life, her dance, her club or something else of tremendous importance," Peter thought. "And now to come into this

room and find her mother talking Chinese!" Lips parted in an uncertain smile, eyes blazing with astonishment—he could see she was trying to think it out. She was asking, "Who is this Chinaman, and why is he talking to Mother like this? When did he know her? What does it mean? Was it in China, when she was a girl? But he looks too young for that! Dear old Mother! Look at her! She looks as young as a girl herself! What in the world is happening here?"

Peter chuckled, and, with his eyes on Kate, he said,

"Hello, Susanna."

With a start and then a laugh, Kate sprang up; and in a moment all of them were on their feet, while eagerly she began to explain, to answer all the questions that her excited young daughter poured out. So close to each other all these years, and now so suddenly apart, with a rush their thoughts and feelings came together. "Here's something new! I belong in this!" Susanna seemed demanding. "And I mean to have it, too!" Her sharp questions came pellmell, and now she began to understand. But, long after they were seated and Moon Chao was talking on, Peter saw Susanna's glance turn again and again to Kate. "Mother in China! A small girl! Why on earth have I never stopped to *really* feel it until now? What a different life she has

had from mine! And to jump way back like this—away from me—and look *so young!* Oh, Jimminy Crickets! *Mother.*” He saw her eyes turn to Moon Chao with a deepening hostility. “What right have you,” she seemed to ask, “to mean so much in my mother’s life? What do you want to do with her now—you *foreigner?*”

The next moment she was given a terrific shock of surprise. For leaning forward in his chair, with his hands locked together tight, the young Chinaman cried to her mother in English,

“And if old age is left behind, why should not you come with me—back at last to my school in Peking?”

Susanna fairly bounced in her seat.

“Mother!” she breathed.

Kate turned and gave a low laugh of delight, at the indignation visible on her young daughter’s countenance.

“Would you like to go, Susanna?” she asked.

“Where?”

“To China!”

“Certainly not!”

Kate laughed again.

“You see, Moon Chao, the trouble you’ll have if you want to move this family. Before Susanna budges, she’ll have to be shown the reason why!”

Moon Chao began to talk to her. Holding her

excited eyes with his own, so black and lustrous, which seemed to widen with his dream—he told of his school, of the life in Peking, of the crowded streets, the costumes, the rickshaws and the camels, the small ponies and the dogs, the big-wheeled, gaily painted carts, the rich bazaars, old temples hidden by high walls and lovely, quiet gardens.

“On a deep, soft Eastern night,” he said, “when the great city of Peking is whispering in dreamland, I shall bring rickshaws to your house. You will be in the little garden there, drinking tea with your ancestors. ‘Let us go to the theatre,’ I shall say; and soon we shall be rushing without a sound along a street that winds in the dark shadow of the ancient city wall. Rushing along in silence! Only the quick breaths of our men—only the soft pad of their feet—and bugle calls from far behind, in the Legation Quarter—and distant cries from far ahead—and a great, quivering glow of light! The glow will brighten, and the cries grow louder, as we rush along—the streets, no longer silent, dark, but gay with the soft glamour of lanterns tossing overhead and from the booths on either side. Such very narrow, crooked streets, with such swarms of people there, and crowded full of rickshaws, too! Now we are dodging in and out, our men still running at full speed. You shall hear the rickshaw silver gongs and the quick ‘Hoy! Hoy!’ of the rickshaw men,

as they dash for every opening! At each instant with delight you shall see beautiful costumes, rich colors and the gleam of gold! You shall enter into the theatre and look down upon the stage—and there you shall see a gorgeous girl—the reigning comedy queen of Peking! You shall——”

“What does she wear?” Susanna cried. Her mother laughed. Moon Chao replied,

“A suit of white satin—embroidered with gold! The trousers tied at the ankles! She is in white, because that is the color of mourning—and she is mourning the death of a suitor! He is not dead—she has been deceived by her wise old father—whom she disobeyed. For he wanted her to marry this man. She refused. Then he told her, ‘The man is dead!’ And at once, to make peace with her ancestor for her disobedience, she goes into mourning and she cries, ‘How I loved that man! Oh my father, I meant to marry him all the time!’ She is frantic with pretended grief—at which the old man smiles—and we, who know the plot, we say, ‘Soon the dead man will appear, and then this young deceptress will have to live up to all this terrible grief of hers!’ ” Moon Chao broke off with a quick smile. “Do you see? It is pure comedy! A kind you can so quickly and so easily understand, that watching this delightful girl who is dressed in such attractive ways, you shall say, ‘These Chinese peo-

ple are human, and I like them all! Why did I call them foreigners? They are like me—they shall be my friends! I see—I hear—I understand!" "

"But how could I understand them?" Susanna, still bolt upright, still half hostile, half afraid, but thrilled and fascinated now, demanded sharply of Moon Chao. He answered,

"You shall learn Chinese!"

"Where?" she asked.

"With a teacher—as your mother learned—and then in the University."

"I? In a college full of Chinamen?" Susanna had dreamed of college for years; and, as her startled fancy tried to make the awful leap from Barnard College in New York to the University of Peking, her face grew eloquent with dismay.

"With Chinamen? No," he answered. "With Chinese girls—delightful girls, who shall be with you every day, and shall become your lifelong friends!"

"Lifelong friends!" she stared at him. A fine, curling wisp of hair got into her eyes. Viciously she blew it aside. Her mother watched her with a smile, and thought, "How unfair to her it would be! Her thoughts are already struggling back—back to school and college here, and all this crowded life she loves!" And, turning to their visitor, she said,

"Moon Chao, we can't go with you. We want to—oh we want to go. But now, you see, there's too much here—not only this daughter of ours, but our school. We have two thousand children now."

But he was not so easily to be stopped in his appeal.

"And I," he said, "have seventy-three. But—oh why will you Americans always measure by numbers? My school is small—but it is great as three small ships upon the ocean, bearing Columbus to a new world. It is great as three little specks in the desert, bearing Wise Men from the East! It is great as the beginning of a mighty new life, for four hundred millions of people!" he cried. With a low, clear, thrilling laugh, Kate said,

"How glad I am—how glad for you!"

"Yes, but you—and you!" he cried. And he turned to Peter. "I know your school—how large it is—and all the good that you can do. But you have given it twenty years—the best of your life. In a few years more it will wear you down—old age will come to you again, never to be put behind! But come with me out to the East, and you will come into a dream so warm with gleaming color and light that new life will pour into you!"

"Yes," said Peter quietly, "but you see, I love my school." As he spoke, his mind flashed over his work. How hard and commonplace it was.

What dirt and din. But he smiled at Moon Chao. "You'll find no gleaming color there—but we're building, son, we're building, too; and like your school it was given to me as a trust from a man whose entire life has gone into the building. Building what? It's hard to say. But in the last hour you've made me feel that in the new and greater America that lies ahead, a part of our greatness is to be our friendship with the new life in the East. I can feel it already in this room. This one night—think what it has done! It has been like a miracle! You are back, thank God; and from this time on we must keep together. Perhaps we shall come to China, some day. In the meantime, we can help you. That school of yours, as it grows and grows, will be to us like a part of our lives!"

With a little tightening of his throat, he broke off, said abruptly, "Tell us your plans." But as he went on to question Moon Chao, and advise him as to what schools he should see, Peter soon began to feel the vividness, the strangeness, of the last hour pass away. Susanna's coming had broken the spell. Again they were parents—real, middle aged—an American school teacher and his wife.

"Never mind," he thought. "It will come back. It must. We must make the most of this. It's like the very wine of youth to Kate, and she must have it all." Aloud, he said,

"Moon Chao, my boy, you must stay with us while you are here."

Moon Chao looked down a moment, his hands locked together tight. Then he looked up and said with a smile,

"Yes, once again—as once before."

3.

And in the months that followed, the miracle of that hour at night, though not so stirring and intense, was clothed in warm realities. Now the old and now the new. The little Moon Chao of long ago, the son of the glory of their youth, came back to them in memories, with his sudden bursts of hungry love, his moods of lonely, deep reserve. And the Moon of today, the teacher, poet, dreamer, builder, he grew steadily more real. As Peter probed into his plans, with relief he felt, "This boy is no mere enthusiast." Already he was tackling hard the methods of teaching over here. Rapidly he was piling up notes and books and pamphlets.

"I have so little time," he said. "I must take them all back with me, to read and study over there. In China very often I shall go into a trance. My friends will ask, 'Where is Moon Chao?' I shall be here in America, trying with you to understand both what is good and what is bad, what to take

and what to leave. For we must learn by your mistakes; and what we take from you we must change and adapt it all to our own life, which is so different from yours. Not so different as you may think, for we are a practical people, too. And yet—and yet we are not the same—nor shall we ever try to be. Japan is trying. Swiftly she is reaching out for all the ways of the Western World, like a bright, greedy boy who cries, 'I can eat anything! Nothing can hurt me!' But Japan is losing fast the very deepest strength and beauty of her national life. We shall not follow. We Chinese shall take the slower, harder path. To watch and watch and study deep, through thousands of our young men and girls who will come to study abroad. But then to choose so carefully. Oh, it will not be easy. And who am I? Already I feel like one small drop in an ocean of peoples. I have seen but a few of your schools; but, as I try to understand what is good for China here, already often I find myself suddenly groping in the dark."

It was in this baffled, groping mood that he grew most real to them. Living with them most of the time, his various little human faults and weaknesses soon came out. After driving hard at his task, he would be plunged in discouragement. But suddenly up again he would rise—and at such moments they both knew that they could never make him real,

that for them he was and would always be like some figure of romance, filled with the vision of their youth.

One evening in the lamp-lit room he recited a dramatic poem that he himself had written from the fable Kate had made for him when he was a little boy, about the old beggar and his bag and the god who had told him of the gold. And, though Peter could catch but a few of the lines, he did not need them; for Moon Chao seemed to change before their eyes and become a weary, hopeless old man. Slowly the picture faded, as the beggar fell asleep. Then came the god—and towering there, with an unearthly glory coming in the powerful face; and, in the smile and the low voice, a deep, serene compassion—Moon Chao seemed dreaming far away. Suddenly Peter's glance was caught by the great golden Buddha, in its shadowy corner, staring out of a thousand years. And the old excitement stirred in him, responding to the call of the East. He looked at Kate. She sat very still, her lips parted in a smile, and he saw that she, too, was far away. Again with tenfold power he felt what it would mean to her to be there. And for a time he barely heard the low, rhythmic, thrilling lines—so intensely was he loving her now. There went through him a swift regret, as he thought, "What a love it might have been. It is here always, underneath the

heavy load of little things of every day that hold it down." In upon his feeling fell the last line of the poem—low, vibrant, hardly more than a sigh—in which was all the tragedy and all the joy of human life:

"We are beggars sitting on bags of gold."

There was silence as Moon Chao sat down. He did not appear to relax—he just grew very quiet. After a moment he said to Kate,

"You see, for many, many years the story that you told me has been here." He touched his breast. "And so it has grown up, like me. Does it please you?"

"Yes," she said in a low voice. "You should be in the theatre, Moon Chao." He smiled.

"Yes? But I should be in my school."

And then Peter asked himself: "Shall we go to Peking and take his place—and set him free? Can I give up my work?" But, as his thoughts went over the long years of struggle here, there was in him an honesty that made him reply, "This is only an hour by lamplight. Already it is slipping away. Tomorrow how sensible I shall be. How my school will grip me then—and the pledge I made to Dillingham, and the opportunity that is here."

And so it was. As he took Moon Chao all through his school, explaining and suggesting, warning against this and that, the spell of the big noisy

building was upon him as before. And watching him Kate told herself, "He'd never be happy away from it now. This is where he belongs. And Susanna, too—her life is here. And she is more to us than Moon Chao—not only the child of that first year but of all the years, the thousands of days. She is part of what we are, not of what we might have been."

So Kate relinquished once again the old dream of her existence. But she did not seem unhappy. Anxiously watching her at times, Peter could feel that the regret had soon lost its poignancy. Like Moon Chao, she was quiet; she turned to the question, "How shall we be able to make the very best of this? We must not lose him this time. How close can we keep to him over there?" She thought of the long, devious route by land and sea, and of letters travelling back and forth, and newspapers and magazines, books and pictures, that would help him in his school. And there would be many messengers, friends that would go to China, and young pupils that Moon Chao would be sending over here. What plans they made! The months sped by, and now the last few weeks had come. She was helping him wind up his search, and bring together all the bewildering things he had learned. There was a last evening. And then, as he had done long ago, Peter stood with Moon Chao by the train. This

time Kate was with them. In all three the memories and the old yearnings rose again.

"Good-bye," said Moon Chao very quietly. "Now we shall keep close—all our lives." He looked at Peter, then at Kate, and smiled. "You will come to the East," he said.

And, as they were walking home through the harsh din of the city streets back into their lives of every day, like some invisible messenger from the Country of What Might Have Been, those last words seemed to follow them.

4.

They missed him in the evenings. With grim, American common sense, they settled down and said little about it, but were nevertheless so forlorn that on the third night Susanna exclaimed,

"Look here, you two, I'm getting pretty sick of this! You haven't lost your *only* child! I'm here, you know—and I'm talking! I've been talking—for some time!"

At the guilty look on her father's face, she burst into a merry laugh.

"You poor dear lambs! It's just as though a great white bird had come swooping down into your lives, and you'd tried to fly away with him! Never

a thought of me, of course! There you both stood, flapping your wings——”

“Lambs haven’t wings, Susanna.” Peter pulled her down to his chair. “Aren’t you ashamed of yourself?” he asked.

“No, only a little jealous. It’s a little hard, you see, to sit here talking, talking—telling my fond parents just how and why I’ve made up my mind to marry a nice young Turk I know——”

“What’s that?”

“Susanna!”

She threw back her head in a laugh that was music to their ears.

“I might have said that—quite easily—with absolutely no effect! You were both way off in China! What difference does it make to you whether I marry a Turk?” she cried. “You both sit here, night after night——”

“He has only been gone three nights,” said Kate.

“Yes, and they seem a thousand!”

“Susanna,” demanded Peter sternly, “whom have you decided to marry?”

“Nobody! At any time! But I mean to march in the Suffrage Parade—as I’ve been trying to tell you all evening—and I want you to do the same!”

“All right, we’ll march,” said Peter submissively.

So, by degrees, from that night on, Susanna came

back into her own. And the life of New York, which after all is not so very dreary, went on again. In came the old demands, and the spell of Peter's work took hold upon him as before.

Meanwhile, across a continent and over a great ocean, Moon Chao was once more speeding home. And they followed him in their fancy. His letters came, and they read them aloud, and wrote letters in reply. And they began to send him things. Peter would come home at night and say, "Here's a book that Moon Chao ought to read." In their daily lives so many things kept cropping up that he ought to have—to help him, to remind him. Once more Kate had a China Club; for, while Moon Chao was with them still, she had gathered a small group of people, to whom he had talked; and later a small club had been formed, to learn about the new life in the East and to help on the work of his school. The roaring city of New York, for all its grab and hustle, is full of such groups, large and small, helping on some new idea in every conceivable part of the globe. When a new idea comes into town, it seems as though the city simply could not be content till a "group" had been formed, with a letter-head and a circular letter to raise funds! Kate now had a letter-head, and her organization quickly grew. Then in the winter a picture came, of a street scene in Peking at night before a little old theatre. The

picture went up on the wall beside the piece of old brocade that had come from China long ago. And later, other gifts arrived. The great golden Buddha was no longer lonely now; he had a small companion, whom Kate's irreverent daughter promptly called, "B. Junior."

In the early summer, a year after he had gone, there came a long letter from Moon Chao telling of his love affair and his approaching marriage. Often in his letters he had spoken of the girl before. He had met her through her father, a well-to-do merchant in Peking who, when Moon Chao's uncle died, had taken his place and had become the chief supporter of the school. Through his increasing interest, the school had ample funds at last; the hard days were left behind. Then the daughter, having graduated from the University, had come to help as a teacher—and so the love affair had begun. Moon Chao was blissfully happy now, as he wrote of their plans for the years ahead.

"And do not forget," he said, "what I told you in New York. You shall both come to China! This I know—this I can feel! And when you come, my home is yours—my school is yours! Oh how happy I shall be when you meet my wife and we shall all be friends together!"

But, in the months that followed, once more he slipped away from them; for in his letters Kate

could feel that he no longer needed them so. His marriage made such a difference. It was as though she had lost a son. So the bright flame of a year before died down and deepened to a glow. That strange little school in the Far East was very, very far away; and the figure of Moon Chao became more and more unreal. Faded? No. If anything, it was more vivid than before—vivid and fantastic, an image deep inside of them, in those vast mysterious regions of the spirit where we dream.

And the figure of Susanna—not fantastic or remote, but intimate, close, a part of their lives, flesh of their flesh—demanded more and more attention. In and out of their home she flashed, forever changing. Up went her hair. What a woman she was! No, what a child! How plain she was—how beautiful! One evening tired, pale and cross; again a dark-haired creature with smiling lips and bright mischievous blue eyes. Now thoughtful, tender, loving; now thoughtless, inconsiderate. Now puzzling over how to meet some new perplexity in her life, or filled with desolation over “some perfectly awful mistake.” Again delighted, treading on air, flushed with triumph, arrogant. And now importantly intent on some immense ambition or ardent, new discovery—a life career, a job, a friend, an opera, a book, a play. A fresh, delightful egotist, demanding attention, thought and love and sym-

pathy, and much advice. So she was to Peter now. Susanna loved to tease him so. One evening she poured into his ear the story of nine dances that she had had the night before with a certain young man whose tango was "simply life itself!" This youth, it seemed, intended to be a mining engineer, and go to China. "So of course we had all *that* in common." Susanna talked on till she had her father thoroughly disturbed and alarmed. Then she burst out laughing. "Oh you poor mountain of a Dad! Just quivering!" And she hugged him tight.

"She will, though," Peter groaned to himself. "She'll marry and we'll lose her. We've only got a few years more."

And at such times he would plan with Kate how to make those few years count—to give her the best of everything. "The more she has, the happier she'll be with us," he told himself, "and the less likely to run off with any young hoity-toity fly-up-the-creek that comes along."

Education for a modern girl—what a puzzling confusion of opportunities in New York, good and bad, sham and real; and it was all made more chaotic by the swiftly changing whims and desires of Susanna.

At eighteen, her mind was made up—"thoroughly"—to be a physician.

"I tell you, Dad, I don't care *that* how hard it

is! I'll work till it kills me—I'll make good! What does all this suffrage mean, and all this talk of modern girls? It means a job or nothing! Marriage? Home? Babies? Decidedly not!"

Peter had winced, a moment before, at the picture of Susanna at work in a dissecting room. But a ray of hope shot into him now.

"Quite right, my dear," he promptly agreed, "these early marriages are a mistake. I'm all in favor of a job. But have you stopped to consider how many kinds of jobs there are?" He gave her a tempting list, but his medical daughter shook her head.

"Nothing—nothing—nothing but this!"

A month later she was wondering how it would feel to go on the stage. A new friend of hers was thinking of that.

"And it has its points, Dad—you know it has! Don't you?" she demanded.

"Yes, I know—I know," said Peter, wrinkling his heavy brows. "I can't say I like especially the way they rouge you up," he began. "But——"

"Rouge you up?" his daughter cut in. "Why you poor old lamb, have you never noticed that half the girls I bring here use lip-sticks every day of their lives? I don't. I don't have to. But the idea of letting a little red paint stand between me and my profession——"

"It's not your profession yet, Susanna."

"No," she said, with malicious delight, "I may go into the movies, instead. Madge Wulliver is already in, and she's getting eighty dollars a week. She says they paint you a *ghastly green*."

But Peter was ready for this thrust. In a pleased, reflective tone he said,

"Well, that's a nice, fresh color to be."

5.

So they watched Susanna grow. Chances, chances, chances. How to reach out and gather them in? It cost money. Music lessons, concerts, plays, lectures, books, clothes, hats and shoes, cost money—and college loomed ahead. Peter's salary was not large, and part of it was used in school. Small pupils, dirty, ragged, sick—there were always scores of them about; and with Dillingham, who was often there, Peter was still working hard at their new plans and experiments. The never ending grip and urge and strain of it all! More and more heavy and distinct grew the lines in his face, and his bushy shock of hair was almost entirely grey. By June he was badly in need of rest, and there was little money in sight to finance a summer in the country.

But one night a letter came from a man up in

Pearly Gates, who since the death of Peter's uncle had been working the farm on shares. It had never been much of a farm, only a strip of twenty-two acres extending back down the mountainside from old Bill's home on the village street. Peter's share of the hay each year had barely paid the taxes. Meanwhile the farm had been "goin' back." And the neighbor now wrote to say that the hay was no longer worth the cutting.

"The fact of the matter is," he wrote, "your uncle's place is so run down it's good for nothing but to help to hold the world together."

"Very well," concluded Kate. "Then it can help hold *us* together—give us a real home at last, where Susanna can bring her college friends, and where you and I when summer comes can rest from our labors. Oh, Peter, my dear, we're getting old—just old enough to have learned what it means really to enjoy our lives," she ended smiling. "So let's go."

The next week they went up to the mountains.

They found it pretty depressing at first. On a lovely afternoon in June, when the whole broad slope of the mountainside was fresh and fragrant with new life, the old house on the village street loomed deserted, grim, forlorn, like some gaunt old beggar there. But soon in the naked musty rooms all three of them were hard at work, sweep-

ing, scrubbing, hammering, puttying, moving in things they had brought from New York. While she worked, Susanna explored, and her exclamations of delight revealed how she was seeing it all—not as a place where life had been, but as the scene of the fresh new life that would come pouring into it. She even saw dances in the barn. For Peter, in the meantime, old memories of the years behind emerged from every corner and took his hand and drew him back. Underneath his uncle's bed he found an old map of Asia.

A queer exciting treasure house. As he lay awake that night, there came to him a curious sense of this flowing together of old and new. Susanna had been too excited to sleep and had remained downstairs to read. Now he heard her step as she came up to bed. She was humming a Fox-Trot! Sacrilege! He chuckled, then drew a breath of content. How well Kate's plan was working out. His thoughts travelled drowsily into the bright years ahead. He fell asleep—and awoke with a start, heard the heavy patter of rain on the roof. "What was it wakened me like that?" There was something cold and wet on his brow. Ghosts? No. For now it came again, a large, unmistakable splash on his face.

"By George, the old roof leaks like a sieve!"

He bought shingles the next day, and set about

to patch the roof; and from that time on he was kept busy tackling jobs all over the house. He had once been quite a carpenter; and Susanna, his eager helper now, was forever discovering something else "that we've simply got to attend to, Dad." Then they went on to larger things. They knocked out a partition and made the store into one big room; and later, after much discussion, measuring and drawing of plans, they started to build a veranda on at the rear of the old house.

"We need a place," Susanna said, "where we can just sit quietly and look down upon the world."

By now it was the end of July, 1914.

CHAPTER VI.

I.

LATER, when Peter looked back on the War, always its beginning was connected in his mind with the sound of hammer and saw and the smell of wood. For, as that vast confusion came rolling in upon him and he tried to comprehend, in a slow, deliberate way he continued his work on the house. And later, in the city, in the same way he attended to the routine work at school. His mind and spirit, startled, lifted, flung about, went groping on. "Beggars sitting on bags of gold." Here was the gold in prodigious masses surging up out of the hearts of men, for good or ill, with a force terrific. In the news of every day, the propagandists of both sides hurled at him the most lurid tales of passions risen from the depths. They sickened him, he passed them by, and read the other tales they told, of courage and devotion, enduring and self-sacrifice. Gold, gold, gold of youth—into the raging furnace it poured. And watching the grim panorama of devotion, death, despair, by slow degrees

month after month, a spell came over all his thinking. The horrors of Belgium and of France, and then of the *Lusitania*, soon drove him into deep, intense and angry feeling against Berlin; but around this feeling crowded a thousand questions in his mind. From all around the world they came, from Russia, China and Japan. For thirty years he had studied maps, and through them now he saw this thing spread swiftly over the face of the earth. He gave up hope of thinking it out, in a way that would shed one ray of light into the shadows that loomed ahead. Dark, real, enigmatic—it was there; and in the spell of its presence his mind and will were beneath a weight inexorable that pressed them down. Slowly, slowly, all the while, he could feel his own country being sucked in.

But when at last the crisis came, it brought a sudden change in his thinking.

All in one night, from China on his way to France, Moon Chao flashed into their home—and was gone. A swift, ardent, tingling shock; a flare and burst of sheer romance. A ring at the door, a quick cry of excitement from Susanna, and the next moment he was in the room, laughing, taking Kate's hands in his. As the storm of questions came, he threw off his coat and revealed himself in Eastern garb of dark blue silk.

"I am going to France!" he cried. "Going with

the Secret, the Great Secret of the coming age! They will not know—they will laugh at us there—a few hundred thousand coolie boys to do the dirty work of war. That is the part they give us to play; that is what they bargained for with the military party which rules China in these days. Reactionaries! 'War!' they cry. And they think in war to force us back into the old condition of things. Very well, we shall go; but in our minds is the seed of a Secret coming to life. It will be hidden, there in France. These clothes I am wearing now for you are a symbol. Tonight I shall take them off; all gleaming hopes will be packed away; and tomorrow a dirty steamship will start across the ocean, filled with Chinese farmer boys in plain cotton working clothes. Over in France they will dig and plough, and the harvest of their labor will give food to people starved by war. And we are glad that this is so." His voice grew low, vibrating, sharp. "But another harvest there will be! As these few hundred thousand boys come home and scatter far and wide over the farms of China, four hundred million people there will waken slowly—slowly feel a sense of what their lives might be—and of the power of the East! And so many other things—such startling, astounding things—will have happened all over the world by then!" His black eyes, deep and lustrous, contracted in long narrow

slits. "I can feel them," said Moon Chao. "So many other forces—urging, lashing, whispering, 'Old China, waken—you are young!'"

Did Moon Chao speak these words that night? Did these pulsing, rhythmic lines all come from his lips, or were they unspoken thoughts flashing out of his dark eyes? Afterwards Peter could not say, for to him it was such a whirling night. To have left and almost forgotten the East; to have been forced, for over two years, to look on the sombre, vast convulsions of an old world torn to shreds, without one gleam on the horizon of any new order to appear. And now to be swept back again! To China? No, into ardent Youth—Youth with the strange immensity of all the East behind it, Youth in the furnace of the Gods, in the grip of the Great Secret!

"Don't forget China!"

Moon Chao had gone.

And coming slowly out of the whirl and trying to collect his thoughts, Peter began to remember now the other things Moon Chao had said. In reply to eager questions, from Kate and from Susanna, gayly he had talked of his wife, the child that had been born to them, the life in their home, the work in their school, the struggles, hopes and disappointments. He had spoken of the slowly widening Students' Movement in his land, barely con-

scious still of its power, scattered and unorganized, and of how the War had stifled it, as the military party and the forces of reaction, with the support of Tokyo, came back again into their own. He had told of the aggressions and encroachments of Japan. He had spoken of the message of hope which, flashing from the White House out to every foreign land, had reached his school, waved in the hand of an excited Chinese boy; and he had recited in Chinese the pregnant, fateful sentences of that promise to all peoples oppressed, that from this time forth they should be allowed to determine for and by themselves what their governments should be. In a low voice he had ended,

"That splendid pledge, giving China new life, will never be forgotten."

2.

Moon Chao was gone. In the rush of those weeks, for Peter and Kate, the memory of his visit was quickly left behind them; but the flame that he had kindled was fed by other messages, from the man in the White House, shooting long rays of light ahead. Peter felt those prophecies sweeping high above him now; and all about and in himself he felt the mighty warmth and light that is revealed when common men suddenly discover the forces

locked within them. In those first months of awakening, he saw only the glory of it all. For him the sinister side of it, the hardening intolerance, the stupid blunders and mistakes, the graft and profiteering, were swept impatiently aside. He had no time for such gloomy thoughts. The school-house changed before his eyes. The parents of boys who had gone away, to the army or the navy, came pouring into the school to help. War Service groups of all kinds were formed, until the whole building day and night was humming with activities. Into his attack on his work had come a religious intensity; and when at times he was assailed by a small, grim, inner voice that said, "Nothing is to come of this, no New Life upon the earth. This is only a Great Death"—with a scowl he turned from such thinking and plunged at the mass of details on his desk.

All through the hot summer months the war activities went on. In a room in the basement of the school, with scores of women and young girls, Kate was managing Red Cross work; it was often midnight when she came home. But she laughed at Peter's warnings that she was overtaxing her strength. The summer changed to autumn. They saw little of Susanna now, for she was up at Barnard, where she had begun her senior year. How mature

she had grown in these last months. Of medium height, strong, vigorous, a dark haired girl of twenty-two, impulsive, laughing, gay at times, but then so quickly sobering down, so much quieter than before—and she talked so little about herself. Through the summer she had worked in a big hospital eight hours a day. “It’s a good stiff course,” she had declared with satisfaction. By autumn she had qualified as a nurse’s aid. She went back to college then, but all fall and winter she watched for a chance; and at last, one night in March when Peter came home, she said to him,

“I’ve done it, Dad—I’m off tomorrow.” At the look that came on his face she added, “I only heard about it at noon, and I tried to get you on the ’phone. I’ve been awfully busy with this and that, but I’m all through now. Where’s Mother?”

“She’ll be here pretty soon,” he said, a little huskily. He began to question Susanna then; and, for all her quiet, Peter could feel the girl’s repressed excitement. And he felt it, too, in Kate, when she came home and heard the news. But almost at once she turned the talk to practical, familiar things—clothes, equipment and the like; and Susanna seemed to be glad of that. She wanted to be quiet that night, to make no splurge about herself, to don no halo—but just go. The next morning, after

breakfast, she quickly finished packing her bag. Peter wished to go with her to the boat. But she said,

"No, Dad, I'd rather not. They wouldn't let you on the pier."

"Then wait till I get a taxi."

"No, thanks," she said. "I'll take the car."

There were brief good-byes. Then she picked up her bag and went out and down the stairs.

As Peter turned back, he saw that Kate's eyes were glistening.

"What will it do to her?" she asked. "I wonder what she will be like, and what she will want, when she comes home?"

"Something very new," he said.

Feeling, just for a little, rather old and left behind, grimly soon he shook it off and went with Kate back to the school, where a mass of details awaited him.

All through the spring the work piled up. A brief letter came from Susanna in France, and then several postcards. They told little. She was working hard. Then came a letter from Moon Chao. "I am well and happy," it began. All the rest was blotted out. And Peter chuckled as he thought of the puzzled clerk in the censor's office reading Moon Chao's prophecies with stern and disapproving eyes. But such brief messages as

these, and the memories they stirred, were now few and far between. For the anxious days had come. The Russian peace, the German drive, and the question: "Shall we be in time?"—kept pressing in. The work went on. Gone was the first stimulus, that tremendous tonic force. By summer it had settled down into a regular, rhythmic drive. The full spell was upon them now. From these plain average men and women, boys and girls, how the inexhaustible energies poured up and up! The old exultant thought returned: "What powers lie buried deep in men!"

Then he felt victory coming at last; and, through the early days of August, after the first glow of relief, there came again a change in him. The peak was passed; and, with that sharp anxiety abating quickly day by day, he was brought back to the old question: "What is coming out of this?" He faced it suddenly one night in the home of his old chief. For Dillingham, who all these months had been almost constantly at the school, gave out one day and was taken home. He suffered very little that night. Lying quietly in his bed, with Peter and Kate beside him, he wondered what the world would be like.

"Don't count too much upon the years just ahead of you," he said. "I have a hunch that all this world-wide brotherhood will be tossed up in a blan-

ket, forty times as high as the moon—and there'll be some pretty ugly times, as there were just after the Civil War. But I'm looking away ahead to-night, and what I see makes me wish I could live—not ten years, but a hundred." He smiled at them and added, "But I guess I'm getting too old for that."

Then he grew very tired. He said good-night and fell asleep. And a little before dawn he died.

For Peter and Kate that long night's watch was like a dividing line. With the great emergency slipping behind, they, too, began to look ahead. And they began to realize now how tired they were. For nearly two years they had worked without a week's vacation, summer and winter. For a few days longer, both of them kept on at school. Then Kate toppled over, one sultry night; Peter brought her home and put her to bed, and the next week he took her up to the Berkshires for a rest. There she was soon herself again; and her old buoyant interest in life came back, as they talked of what the War might bring. A new world to rise out of this, at once, by a miracle? Oh no. But the foundation stones at least of a greater, richer, kinder life for all humanity. In the very uncertainties of it all lay for them the fascination. Soon Moon Chao would be coming through, on his way back to China—to what pregnant happenings there?

And Susanna would be coming home—to what kind of a career? It was good to talk about these things, as one basked in the warm, sunny, mountain air; for they both had a feeling now that the harvest time had come at last, not only of the War abroad, but of their own lives as well. A new world order opening up, a daughter beginning her womanhood, a school where Peter was just on the eve of his best work.

“To reap at last what we have sown.”

3.

In September they went back to town; and there at once he felt a change. In the posters, editorials and speeches shouted on the streets, gone was the big generous vision of a New World and a Great Peace; and all around him Peter could feel a swiftly spreading impatience with all such dreaming. “Crush the Huns!”

“What has happened? What has gone wrong? How have they changed so suddenly?” he asked. “Or is the change in me? Have I been blind to something that has been rising all the while?”

As the spell of the War let go of him, it was as though he had climbed a hill and, looking back down on the battlefield, for the first time realized where he had been—looked back into the murk and din,

the smoke and heat, and saw not gods but common men, in whom the War had summoned forth not only courage and devotion but, along with these, other passions, hate, revenge. And with grim irony it had left these last to do the work of Peace. Let anyone speak for a lasting peace, terms possible, terms reasonable, and they cried, "Down him! He's a Hun!" And, as this hysteria spread, it was turned on every critic of the existing order of things. Peter heard the word "Bolshevik" applied to almost every man, radical or liberal, that he had known from the time long ago when he had entered the Great Revolt.

And then, one night in early December, into his home came Anna Blainey. Nearly twenty years had gone since he had taught in her small school. Since then, he had seen her from time to time and had helped her when he could. Though she was over sixty now, she had kept strong, and there was still the old quiet conviction in her voice. She came at once to the point of her visit.

"I've come to ask you, Peter, whether you can see your way to helping us," she started in. "I know you don't agree with us on many things, but you will on this. You are a liberal. You stand for the old rights and liberties."

"What has happened?" Peter asked.

"A mob broke into our school tonight, and

smashed our desks, typewriters—threw them out into the street. And, when some of our boys and girls tried to jump in and interfere, they were so badly beaten up that they are now in hospitals—and one boy may possibly die.” She went on to give him the details. “On Friday night,” she ended, “we’re going to hold a meeting of protest. I’ve come to ask if you’ll be there to speak for the rights that you believe in. You are the head of a big public school, and your words would have a strong effect. I know that you believe in schools—all kinds of schools—in a free country—free to teach whatever they like.”

“Except violence,” Peter said.

“But you know,” she retorted quietly, “that we have never taught that in my school. You are against violence. You are against that mob tonight.”

He looked at her.

“Will you come?” she asked.

“Let me think it over. I’ll give you my answer tomorrow,” he said.

When she had gone, he lit his pipe and settled down to face a storm of questioning. He was filled with a sharp exasperation—first against that mob of men, and then against her and all her friends. He angrily thought, “It isn’t so simple as you say! You did your best, every one of you, to hinder this

country in the War! If we'd listened to you, the Kaiser would now be ruling a German world! You were wrong! And, too dogmatic still to see it, you have seized this chance to make capital for your propaganda out of this time of passion! Why couldn't you have waited a bit, a few months more, till the mob quiets down? But no, you've seized it as your chance—paraded waving your red flags, held meetings, flooded the town with your leaflets, did all you could to rouse the storm! And now you want to drag into it men like me! Do you know what it means? If I go and speak in your defence, at once I'm called a Bolshevik and in all probability thrown out of school! All my life work must go by the board!"

But his anger cooled and he asked himself, "What am I so excited about? Let's try to be fair and see this right. Is she driving me into a corner? No. She simply asked, 'Can you see your way to speak at our meeting?' If I refuse, will she press it? No." He puffed his pipe. "But can I refuse? Do I want to refuse? I do believe in freedom of speech and in free teaching, as she said. Am I ready to stand up for it now? That's the only question here." He smiled bitterly and asked, "I wonder if all liberal men are to be driven into corners like this?"

And his anger swung back against the mob.

A few minutes later, when Kate came home and he told her what he was facing, he felt her go through the same inner conflict.

"What will you do?" She looked at him anxiously. And when at first he made no reply, "It isn't simple, is it?" she said.

"No—it isn't simple."

"But isn't there any other way out, a way we won't be ashamed of?" He made no answer for a time. Then he said,

"She had a big ugly bruise on her hand. I noticed it when she said good-night. . . . And she's over sixty."

Kate turned a little white at that. Restlessly she moved to the window and stood looking down into the street. A few moments later, he heard her ask,

"What would John Dillingham say to this?"

At the mention of his name, the man's whole personality seemed to pour into the room. And there was a long silence, as though they were both listening.

"He'd be angry about it as we are," said Peter quietly at last, "both with the mob and with the Reds. He'd feel his school in danger. But he'd be just as certain, as you and I have been from the start, that I've got to go to that meeting and speak."

The decision brought him a deep relief. His

whole mind had been locked tight in one of the worst snarls of his life, but now the eyes of his spirit opened abruptly, wide and clear, to see this in its true proportions. And so, in the brief speech he wrote, he put into phrases blunt and plain the facts of the raid and his protest against it, and then he went back to the great appeal that had lifted America into the War, had lifted the very War itself into a vast devotion, a reaching out of common men for the old, old dream of the Better Day.

Back at school he found it hard. Though he had not yet announced his intention, already in his fancy Peter could see the satisfied smiles of all of his old enemies in the city public schools. How they would rub their dry old hands! "We've got him at last, this radical! He played with fire when he was young. He has been dangerous ever since to all that we believe in. But he had it all so nicely hidden, like his old chief, Dillingham. Now, thank God, he's driven out at last into the open!" Peter grew hot and cold with anger. One by one the things he had planned, with Dillingham, with Kate or alone, the vital, definite, concrete things, steps on the road to the school of tomorrow, crowded in upon him. Must they all be given up? On the day of the meeting, he could feel the rumor spread of what he was about to do; for instantly there came a change in the attitude of his teachers. Those

who had disliked him were obviously exulting now, and most of the others drew away. In an atmosphere growing quickly cold, he could almost hear the word, "Bolshevik!"

And with this behind him, Peter went to the meeting that night.

There he found the street outside packed with men, or rather boys, about half of them in uniform. Several hundred policemen kept pushing them back from two narrow lanes that led into the building. As Peter came through, he heard shouts and jeers, saw thousands of bitter, angry eyes. The hall inside was filling fast with radicals of various kinds, some frightened, others enjoying the thrill, still others with the exultant look of martyrs. Watching them, he asked, "What chance will there be for any clear thinking here to-night?" But Peter set his heavy jaws. "I'm not going to back out of this." He looked about him on the platform, then glanced through the list of speakers. Anna Blainey had told him of other outsiders she meant to ask. There were none. All the others had declined. More and more his look went down to the row of newspaper-men who were sitting just beneath him. "That's really why I'm here," he thought.

At last it was his turn to speak. In the beginning he threw out his blunt statement of the facts, his protest against the raid, and there was applause

for that; but, as he went back to the aims of the War, he felt the crowd fast drop away; he faced long rows of smiling eyes that seemed to say, "This poor old fool, this liberal! A good old scout, he had the nerve to come here and talk, stand up for his old fashioned ideals. But what a sentimentalist! He still believes in this Bourgeois War and in this League of Nations." Grimly he continued. He talked no longer to the crowd but to the row of men from the press. All at once he noticed a youngster there whose left arm was in a sling and who wore a service badge. He was staring up in a questioning way; and looking straight down at him Peter asked,

"Have we so soon forgotten? What was it we were fighting for? To lick the Kaiser? Yes, but more. What was it roused this nation from East to West and North to South? Was there no mighty vision there? Were all those deaths to sweep us on to a world no better than before? The world made safe for democracy. Every nation, every man, to be free to determine his own life, so long as he does not harm the rest. Live and let live—tolerance. Have we so soon forgotten all that? When shall such belief be tested? Only when we disagree. The Russian Czar and the Man in Berlin were tolerant toward every man who agreed with them and upheld their rule. Surely we mean

more than that. Here are men we do *not* agree with. How are we to deal with them? By clapping them all into jail? By mobbing, lynching, beating up, all that we don't believe in ourselves? Is this the way to the Great Peace? What do you mean by democracy? How in God's name can it work, if we turn down the liberties that men for ages in the past have fought and died for—freedom of speech, freedom to think and say what you please, so long as you keep within your rights! And the people in that school were within their rights last Tuesday night!"

A burst of applause from the Reds behind, and in an instant Peter felt the boy to whom he was talking change and harden, saw him glance back with dry, bitter, smiling eyes. The futility of it! "What can I do in a place like this, with the crowd in here, the mob outside?" He finished his speech; and as he left the platform he heard a perfect roar of cheers, as a well-known socialist arose.

"That's it, that's what they want," he thought, "something good and hot and blind—both here and out there on the street!"

As he left the hall and came through the lane between the angry crowds outside, a policeman started to follow him, but Peter quickly turned and said,

"No, thanks, I don't want your protection."

He had gone but a short way down the street when he heard steps behind him. He wheeled and faced two furious lads who wore navy uniforms. They came up; and one of them, who did not look above eighteen, excitedly demanded,

"What the hell were you doing in that hall?"

"Still licking the Kaiser," Peter said.

"You mean you were talking *against* the Reds?"

"No, I was talking against *you*. And I'm old enough to be your father. Go on home and go to bed."

They hesitated, scowling up with fists clenched and threatening. Then, "Come on, Sam," the other one said, "Let this Christ-forsaken old nut go back to the Asylum."

4.

The next afternoon, in the office of "Old Granite," the deputy school superintendent, Peter said,

"No—I won't resign."

His old enemy's face wore a quizzical smile.

Not after those accounts in the papers?"

"No—not after those accounts. They garbled half of what I said and omitted the rest."

"And you're willing, while this fight goes on, to keep your school under a cloud of scandal, treason and disgrace?"

"I'd rather do that than leave it to you."

The fight dragged on for several weeks. Red tape, official hearings, a special committee appointed to investigate his case. From various quarters, both within and without the school system, forces were roused to hold back the steam roller, voices were raised in Peter's defence; but the other voices clamoring in soon drowned out this minority. From the time so many years before, when he himself had been a Red, Peter's speeches were brought forth and combined with his defence of them now. Was such a man to be left in charge of two thousand boys and girls, who would soon be citizens? Should he be allowed to poison their minds with thoughts so un-American?

Just before the new year began, he was notified of his expulsion.

There followed two bleak, bitter months, when it seemed to Peter Wells as though the whole structure of his life had come tumbling, crashing down. With steady, vigilant, anxious eyes Kate watched him now. They were alone. Moon Chao and Susanna were still in France. Moon Chao had tackled the hopeless job of obtaining ships to take the coolies back to their homes; and Susanna, since the Armistice, had been hard at work on Civilian Relief in the devastated regions. Again and again she wrote long letters picturing the dire need, indignant over

the lack of funds. "Has America suddenly gone poor? What's the trouble with you folks at home?" she asked. She did not know of Peter's trouble.

"Let's wait," he had urged, "till she comes home. The worst will all be over then."

But the worst still lay ahead of him. Tired, beaten, dulled at first, it was a relief to have the suspense, the tension, the publicity, all done away with and to rest. It was good to stay at home with Kate. All through his crisis, she had been a tower of strength close by his side; and, though she looked tired now, she was a great companion. Reading, knitting, talking at times, drifting back into old memories—so the first few weeks went by. But the news from the world outside kept breaking in upon them. Over in Paris day by day the dream of a Great Peace grew dim; from many parts of the Old World, where civilization rocked and groaned, came desperate appeals for aid. But the people over here had grown sick and tired of it all. From the long hard drive and strain and exaltation of the War, they were turning in reaction to an era of grab and frenzied spending. On the streets, when Peter went out, their faces looked hard and tough to him; and his bitterness was made more acute by the injustice he had suffered. He had no money, it had all gone into war activities. So, through the few friends he had left, he managed

to get some tutoring; and soon he was going about in the evenings, as he had done long ago. He looked years older. On the street he passed young men and girls on their way to dances, movies, plays, or to shops, to spend their money. Most of them were earning more than any teacher in Peter's school. A smart young girl who could trim a hat was worth more to the world than a teacher now.

5.

Slowly the winter wore away. "We're through the worst of it," Kate said. "Susanna will soon be coming home, and in May we'll go to the mountains."

But early in March she took a bad cold, and Peter made her go to bed. "It's nothing," she said. "Just leave me alone and you'll see how much better I'll be by night." But when he came home that evening he found her much worse, with pains in her chest, her color high. "It's the Flu," he told himself. Back went his thoughts to the night long ago when Susanna had had pneumonia. Peter had dreaded it ever since. "It's so damned ugly—works so fast—gives you no time to get ready!" he thought. "And she has a weak heart!" He went out at once for a doctor; and, when an hour later his worst fears were realized, Peter braced himself and said,

"Now tell me exactly what I'm to do."

"Do you want a nurse?" the physician asked.

"No. I spoke of that. She won't have one. She wants me."

He went back and sat down by her bed. Her eyes were closed, but she knew he was there. He noticed now the lines in her face. Kate was forty-seven years old, and her soft, fine hair was already turning grey. "But she has always kept herself young," he thought determinedly. "She's a fighter, and she wants to live!" In a moment her hand came out for his.

"I'm pretty sick, Peter," she whispered. "But don't worry. We'll get through this."

"Yes."

"Only don't go away. Keep hold of my hand. You give me so much more than you know."

Toward the middle of the night, after a long, fierce struggle for breath, she muttered, smiling,

"I can't stand many more like that."

Peter grew rigid, straining, as though all she were suffering had been gathered into himself.

"It won't last long. You must!" he said.

An hour, and another, passed. Between the battles that she fought, a gleaming light came in her eyes.

"I'm going somewhere, Peter!" Her whisper

was so sharp and clear that he started forward in alarm. "Back—back—back to the East! I have the strangest feeling! Keep hold of me! Remember, dear——"

A terrible fear struck into him then. Leaning forward, her hand in his, he felt her suddenly slip away from him into delirium. He faced his last big fight alone.

A strange thing happened to Peter that night—strange as the rising of the sun, mysterious as the break of day. He had lived with Kate nearly thirty years. In all that time, those thousands of days, in lives all filled with little things—worries, tangles, petty quarrels, disagreements, comforts, joys—their love, upon the surface, had seemed to grow dull, middle aged. But to-night he knew it had not been so. Beggars sitting on bags of gold. Down beneath their consciousness there had been lived two deeper lives—lives in which no memories were ever lost or cast aside, where all their struggles, hopes and dreams, bleak disappointments, sudden joys, lived on, piled up. And between those lives this love had grown to such amazing power that now as it came bursting up he felt as though his whole existence were in Kate's. She could not die! Sitting there with her hand in his, he could feel a vital current passing into her from himself. "You give me

so much more than you know." At first he could feel only that. But later, with his senses dulled, his inner vision growing clear, as though a mist were lifting, other intimations rose—of deep, hungry aspirations, the grim courage that had never died. And as from that subconscious world he could feel these powers rise, in the days and nights that followed, his strength seemed inexhaustible—giving, giving, pouring out, yet with no feeling of fatigue. He had no need of food or sleep. His mind kept curiously clear. Though he seemed to be living in a dream, the figure of the physician kept breaking in at intervals; and then Peter questioned, answered, listened, followed each direction. And yet all that was trivial, small, mere movements in a little room. The greater struggle was inside. Down in deep, still waters, the searching and the finding and the outpouring still went on.

And all at once he was not alone. One night, in the soft glow of the lamp, he saw in her dark, shining eyes a radiant recognition.

"I've come back, dearie."

"Where have you been?"

"At first I wanted to go to China. Oh, how hard I wanted it—the cool, dark ocean and the stars. But I could feel you hold me back. Too tired to fight you, I gave in. And you said, 'There's another journey.' I could feel you take my hand—and

off we drifted, back through our lives. And—oh, Peter—the miracles!” Smiling still, she closed her eyes. He bent close over her and said,

“You mustn’t try to tell me now—you must rest.”

There came in answer a faint ripple of a laugh.

“But I’m not afraid of dying now. That seems so unimportant. I’ve so much to tell you now. The only thing I’m afraid of is that after being very good and resting, as the doctor wants, I might die after all and not have told you. Oh Peter, Peter, don’t let’s be safe. Let’s take the splendid, dangerous way. Come with me, before I forget! There was so much—but all in a dream. Let’s go and find if it was real! Because if we can only find it—real, real—not just a dream—then life or death is nothing!”

Speaking in whispered fragments—she needed no more, for he caught the rest—as in a rare, exalted air, along the edge of a precipice, just clinging to existence but with no fear of the void below, she took him back again through the years. And now with a redoubled warmth he felt the slowly kindling glow of those two greater, deeper lives, compounded of What Might Have Been. She whispered just the fragment, “That night at school—when I came out in the hall and found you with Moon Chao.” Then up with a rush came the memories of that first night together, and of the months that followed, when their love had grown as though never to stop.

And they felt how it might have gone on growing, breaking all chains; all the petty, worrying, hard, little things swept away in radiant understandings, in giving, giving, giving. Only to one another? No—reaching out beyond themselves and turning everything to gold.

“That letter from Peking,” she whispered. And this time nothing could hold them back. No cautious, anxious reckoning. What an ocean they crossed that night—what starry skies! And the old city of Peking—a miracle beyond his dreams—rich with a million days and nights!

“And the school,” she whispered, “grew and grew! Oh how hard it was at first. There was so little money, so few friends to stand behind us. And the school, so tiny, it seemed as though it would never start. What long, long nights when Susanna was teething and I was teaching you Chinese!” Again the faint, clear ripple of laughter. “But how we laughed and laughed at troubles. The miracle was always there—this love of ours, and the strength it gave—the dear joy of being alive! And the memory of Dad was there. ‘Do this for China—for the East—for half the people of the earth!’ . . . And Moon Chao—what a strange little boy—who knew he was going to be a great actor. We took him back to live with us. . . . And the winter passed—and

summer came—and we went out of the city—to the old temple on the hill.

“And all that,” she said softly, “was only one of the Might-Have-Beens. . . . And it wasn’t just a dream—it was more real than the things we did all those years in this little room. It was always there inside of us; and something, so tremendous, bright, was always waiting, whispering, ‘Come to me, and all this that is in you will have life! Come, come to the East, the splendid East!’ . . . Years—so many—wore away. And when Moon Chao came back to us here, do you remember how all at once, in you, in me, it came bursting up, and we knew that it had never died? What was it that he called himself? The son of the glory of our youth! And all the other Might-Have-Beens—oh, Peter, they were all like that—all sons of the love that had grown and grown—even though we barely knew! All real! Because they were in us still—parts of the love that had never died!”

She drew a long, smiling breath, and he saw a haze come over her eyes.

“Now I’ll sleep,” she whispered.

6.

As though he were still under a spell, Peter sat watching, listening. He saw the lines of her face

relax, the breathing slow and regular. He knew that she was past the crisis; and, as this certainty grew and grew, it seemed to lift him up on wings. In the days and nights that followed, this feeling came again and again, sweeping away all weariness, bearing him on into dreams of his own.

All at once he was in a spacious room. How quiet it was. Only now and then he heard the turning of a page. He began to see the faces of hundreds of readers. And the books—in numberless thousands!—suddenly they seemed alive. And in a kind of terror he thought, "All the world is in this room!" A feverish vigor seized him. How swiftly he was writing now! With a miraculous power and ease the images, the thoughts and scenes, kept sweeping up out of himself. As he wrote, the figure of a man drew close and real, familiar, massive. And Peter grew rigid, as in a trance; for, as he wrote, it seemed to him that he himself were facing a hundred million people—rousing them to a consciousness of what they all might do and be! They grew tempestuous as the sea! And straining, straining, suddenly as though some heavy bonds had snapped, he felt himself soar to a region where in spite of the stillness there he could feel the irresistible rush of the deep waters of life. Gigantic figures loomed around him. With a kind of awe he knew that they were the Great Doers, Builders, Seers of

all the Ages. Then down he dropped into the dark, exhausted, into dreamless sleep.

As he drifted back to consciousness, he felt a soft, familiar glow of light and warmth around him. He opened his eyes, and suddenly he was back in his room. As he lay on his bed, he felt strange, light headed, weak. "What has happened?" He tried to think it out. With a sharp quick effort he turned his head to the bed next his. It was empty! Kate was gone! And terror seized him, but it passed almost as quickly as it came; for he felt her presence in the room. He turned his head the other way and saw her sitting by the lamp, pale, thin and shadowy—like a ghost. But, as though she had been spoken to, she looked up presently from her book and smiled at him.

"Oh, dearie, what a sleep you've had—and how tired you must be. We'll have to take care of each other now."

Slowly, slowly, day and night, as Kate's strength returned to her, they felt the life of every day take hold again upon them—its small details all welcome now, for they felt weary and relaxed. The room grew more and more real to them. "Here we lived, those thousands of days and nights—while all that went on inside." Again they began to remember their vision; and, as one by one the intimations out of those distant, deeper lives came stealing back

mysteriously, once more they felt the call of the East and drifted into dreamland.

7.

And soon that summons was renewed, in terms of warm reality. For, in the weeks that followed, first Moon Chao and then Susanna came back from France. And Susanna, so much more mature but impulsive as before, filled with dismay at the change in her parents, and with indignation over the injustice Peter had suffered in his school, shook off her old hostility to Moon Chao and supported his plan that her parents should go with him to Peking.

"It's what you have both wanted all your lives," Susanna said, "and there isn't a reason on earth why you shouldn't go there now. And I am going with you. After what I've been through in France, I want to get just as far away from the War as I possibly can. I don't mean to be a slacker—I'll soon find a job over there. If I don't like it, I may come back—and you may want to do the same. But this is no time for attempting to plan out all the rest of our days. The point is that we all need a big change—and we're going to have it!"

One by one their objections were swept aside. Money? Susanna had some saved, and there were a few Liberty Bonds to be sold, and the furniture in

the flat. This would take them to Peking, and there Moon Chao offered them his home.

"You must stay with me as long as you like," he begged them, "I hope it will be for years! Think of all you have done for me. You have treated me like a son, and you must let me be one now. I know you will not be so unkind as to refuse me—you will come! In my house there are many rooms," he continued, smiling, "and there is a little garden, where we shall sit under the skies at night and talk of the work we have done that day, and of the work that we shall do—for in my school there is work for you both; and, if you decide to stay in China, there will be work for the rest of your lives. And there will be so much more than that! For do not forget the theatre—the nights when in rickshaws we shall rush along through dark and silent streets—deep into the glories of the Past, and of the years that rise ahead!"

"Oh Moon Chao!" Kate whispered. There were warm tears in her bright eyes. "If only I were strong and young!" Her strength was so precarious still; she seemed but the phantom of her old self. After the desperate crisis through which they had come together, it had been good to sink again into this familiar life. They had lived here nearly thirty years, and it was hard to break away.

As they were still holding back, still undecided and

afraid that they might be a burden, Susanna came home in triumph one day and announced that she had taken a place in the new American hospital which had been opened in Peking.

"That settles it!" she ended, in a firm, decided tone.

But it seemed to Peter still like a dream.

"You see, Moon Chao, I'm getting old," he said, "too old for a big fresh start like this. I keep wondering how much use I'll be."

It was a lovely afternoon toward the end of April. They had brought Kate up to the roof of the old house on Stuyvesant Square, where the voice of the turgid city beneath was subdued and far away, where the sun with all its healing glow seemed pouring new life into her. Now it was well down in the West.

"Old?" Moon Chao leaned forward, his big eyes flashing in the sun. "Now you yourself shall reveal to me the deep, deep youth inside of you! That mighty, mighty life beneath, those boundless depths and visions—have you forgotten all so soon? When you sat by the bed of your wife, and soared away on memory wings to the East with her—did you feel old? Old age is only for the blind! Blind beggars! You have seen the gold! Come to the East and you will see the beginnings of what will set the whole world free from the chains that bind us now! In every country of the earth, cold and dark,

tumultuous years, a vast confusion, looms ahead. And the darkness will not be dispelled till the Great Secret is revealed! Come to the East, and you shall see!"

Kate smiled at this fantastic boy, so gay with the eternal, radiant arrogance of dreams, the arrogance of being young, of seeing, understanding all, of sweeping all humanity into himself and, like a god, moulding it to his own image. She asked him,

"What is the Great Secret?"

Moon Chao looked off to the setting sun.

"I think that I can tell you best by a little story," he replied. "One night in Peking, I sat by a window listening to a speech on the street. It was a soft and lovely night—soft as the air in the East can be, lovely with rich colors, and the stars and a great half moon. The speaker was a student boy. He was talking to a group of peasants come into the markets from the farms, and he spoke of how the power of the rulers of Japan was slowly fastening on our land. 'What will this mean to you?' he asked. 'Will they drive you off your farms? No, you will labor as before. But through taxes, mortgage bonds and many, many tyrannies, year by year the chains will grow—until at last when you are old you will be no longer men but slaves! Then the time will come for you to die, and you will go to your ancestors. They will ask, 'What have you done with

China?" Think of the shame you will feel then!" When he spoke these words, you could see in their faces how all these peasants came under a spell. It was as though some mighty hand had been laid upon their spirits. 'But, in your everlasting lives, this will not be the worst,' he said, 'the deepest shame you must endure. For the state of China under Japan will steadily go down and down, and the slavery you suffered here will be as nothing when compared to the deepening degradation that will come to the spirits of your sons. And then these sons in turn will die and will come to you, their ancestors. 'What did you do to China?' they will demand in sorrow. Think of the shame you will feel then!' "

There was a moment's silence. Moon Chao turned quietly back to Kate and said,

"This is the Great Secret. In the East, we think not only of what is outside a man's body but of how it will affect the man's spirit life within. . . . The people of America are not thinking of that now."

They listened to the roar from below. It was the rush hour, five o'clock.

"No, they are not thinking of that," said Peter. "But a year ago——"

"Yes, then you felt a Great New Day—stealing over the face of the earth! But, as you had always done before, you fastened your thoughts on what

you must *do!* You did not stop to think out what you felt or to clear up your new ideal! A generous impulse swept your land—and you could make guns—and you could kill men! And so you saved the world from Berlin! But then, because this new ideal was only an impulse, very vague—or perhaps a million impulses of different kinds, not strong and clear—it could not hold together and keep its grip upon your souls! So it died! Already in Versailles the great promises you made, to China and all countries, one by one are being betrayed! And by your splendid sacrifice what good did you do—to the world, to yourselves? Thirty million people are dead! Has the world been made better, happier? No!

“Your western revolutionists declare, ‘But we will make it so.’ And they point to books by thousands, expounding and expounding their plan of freedom for all men. I find so much in them that is true, that I believe their rising force is needed now to blast away the rubbish heaps of old ideas. But one great thing I do not find. They give no thought to the inner man. They will try to change the world outside by giving it to the man on the street. They believe in him, and they are right. He has the gold inside of him. But to give it conscious life, that is the Great Enigma! To destroy—yes, that is easy—and it will be quickly done. But then they will be-

gin to build, and as in Russia they will find that the peasants and the laborers will show dull eyes for great ideals and hard tight fists for what is theirs. Into their new governments will creep intrigues and scandal, greed and waste and stupid bungling, as of old. And even when at last they build a government, a system, that will feed their bodies, the mass will say, 'It is enough. Now we have enough to eat, clothes to wear and good warm homes. Let us risk no more new ideas. Let all our very comfortable and equal citizens think alike.'

"Some will bitterly declare that this dreary sameness is all the fault of the common crowd and the new order. They will be wrong! It began a hundred years ago. Already the world has been bound so close that what one nation does or dreams damns or blesses all the rest; and this will go on, in the years ahead, even swifter than before. Armies, not of soldiers but of commercial travellers, will flow back and forth in endless tides by ships and trains, on land and sea. Factories by millions, and books, newspapers, picture shows, will pour forth their pattern goods, their pattern thoughts and feelings—all working swiftly to one end—that all the peoples of the earth shall wear the same clothes, think alike, and see and feel and dream alike! What a dreary world it will seem to be!"

He stopped abruptly, his big lean hands locked

together like a vise, and again he stared at the setting sun. Then Kate, who had been watching him affectionately, smiled and said,

"But the Great Secret. Have you forgotten that, Moon Chao?"

He turned back to her.

"No—I have not forgotten." His voice was low and quivering. "For, from the beginning, while all that is going on, beneath that comfort of the body, that stagnation of the mind, will still be the eternal, unconscious, yearning cry of man, 'Let me be free within my soul! Let me be different—myself!' In every land, from the very start, there will be some to voice this yearning—only a few, but they will increase, and they will search the world for their friends. Over the lands and across the seas, and in vessels through the skies, will go these rebel dreamers; and in each land they will find what they seek. Beneath the deadening sameness, the differences will still exist. They will find this passion for liberty still. With a glad light in their eyes, they will cry,

"'Oh my foreign brother, thank the Gods we are not alike! And in our very differences, the joy of life, the fascination, and the essential brotherhood lies! We are not the same—so we can give! How much you have to learn from us; how much we have to learn from you! But in all this giving, learning,

let us never become the same! What we take let us make our own, so that in passing from you to us it shall become different—something new!

“In things for the body this is hard, but in things for the spirit it is not so. What is the greatest new force of our age? The awakening of Woman to the things that she can do. There at first the West will teach the East. But, when our women have roused at last, will they be the same as your women here? No, no, no, a thousand times—ah, how different they will be! Only this they will have alike—their love of children, the mother's belief that in her child there is great gold. And to save this gold before the child shall harden into a dull beggar man, the mothers in every land will rise, demanding schools—schools multiplied—schools splendid—schools into which is poured a wealth of wisdom, watchful care and understanding sympathies, a wealth as deep as the gold that lies in the children waiting for the light! For in this is the whole hope of the world. Slowly, slowly, it will be—not by sudden miracles but through struggles and mistakes, through many generations, that these children growing up, different in every land, will slowly rear upon the earth and reaching up into the stars, a new civilization, built on the communion of free individual souls—helping one another—giving, receiving—rising still! Only then will the radiant

splendor of the Brotherhood of Man be flashed up into the heavens! And the past will then seem cold and dim as the deepening dusk in a valley below. We shall see shadows loom down there, shades of the great men of the past. They were great men, those ancestors," he ended in a reverent tone, "they were as great as men can be when rising each by himself alone, out of the dark valley depths. But up on the high plateau of the future, other great men will arise, who need not start from the depths below—they will start from the mountain ridge of the new common life of men! And so their shining peaks will rise—and men and gods will at last be one."

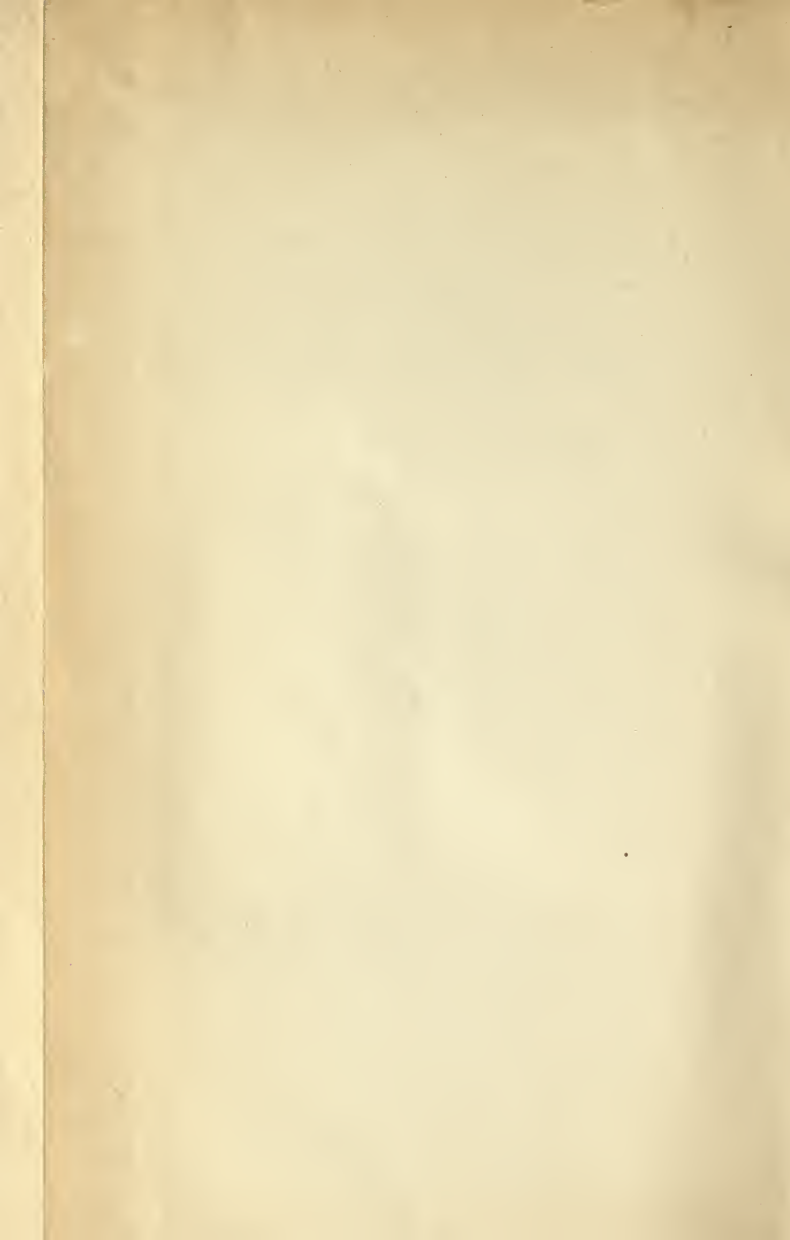
As though coming slowly back from a far distant country, he looked at Kate, whose smiling face was quivering and wet with tears. He took her hand and turned to Peter.

"Come to the East!" he whispered. "Be one of the explorers into the vast mysterious life which in your vision you have seen. Come and help me in my school, and watch the great awakening! Come with me! I am the son of the first glory of your youth—and I have come back to bid you heed the voice of the gods within you, whispering, 'Live! You are still young!'"

It seemed to Peter, as he turned his eyes out over the twinkling lights of the city, off across the

river to the glow in the darkening sky, that all he heard had been a dream. And as in a trance he heard Kate's voice, as she answered softly,

"Yes, now at last, Moon Chao, we'll come—to the East to help you in your school—and see a thousand years ahead—into the Promised Land at last—into the death of the Beggar Days—into the birth of the Age of Gold."



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